I have a tremendous amount of respect for you Beat Without writers, I don't want to be one. At least not one doing life. I can't be mad though, because I chose to live the life I led, always the one to walk on the wild side. I guess my past caught up with me and in a hurry.

check out the rest of Big Vic's POW on page 6

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.07

Is time flying by or what? Well, we hope the time you are spending on your unit, in your cell has been/is productive for you. Only you know if you are making good use of the time, or wasting it by chilling and talking mess. All right, this week we asked our old friend and colleague, who also is one hell of a writer, Michael Kroll to step up and put together this week's editorial note, and that he has. No need for further introduction, we only hope in the end you will make something of your life other than being content as a number, or the label that has so easily been put on you by the alleged case you are fighting or have fought. OK, here's Michael...

I was watching a funny TV show the other night (Jon Stewart's "The Daily Show"), but while we were laughing at the jokes, we were also thinking... Thinking about why the majority of people (including us) can laugh at some things sometimes, but be horrified at the same things at other times. For example, we can accept the deaths of 3,000 American soldiers in Iraq (and at least 600,000 Iraqi dead) as "the cost of war," but react in shock when the war at home results in street killings, or when someone goes into a shopping mall and randomly shoots and kills half a dozen people.

I was thinking about all this while I watched that funny TV show. It was about a Russian guy, Alexander Litvinenko, who was poisoned to death in London, probably by people working for the Russian government, perhaps on the orders of President Putin himself. But as I laughed, there was something about the laughter that left an uncomfortable aftertaste. And the taste has lingered.

Later in the day, I read one of those pieces in The Beat that makes us want to scream, that makes us want to shake the writer into awareness, one of those pieces that are as rare as those at the opposite end of the spiritual-literary spectrum, the ones that make us want to stand up and applaud for their thoughtfulness and wisdom.

The 15-year-old writer of the piece that upset me boasted of killing other youngsters — a child who felt no need to justify his pride since the "enemy" is, well, you know, THEM! And then I thought about how I had laughed at the jokes concerning the murder of Mr. Litvineko, and it hit me. Rooted in our day-to-day focus at The Beat, which takes so much of our time every single day, that bad aftertaste became a question: "What do we demand of you, our mostly poor Beat writers, that we don't demand from our own rich leaders?"

Just this week, the United States Congress is debating a resolution about the President — the national shot caller — sending an additional 22,000 men and women into battle. Like a gang shot caller, he is "the decider," and he decides to order soldiers (not his own children, of course) to die for "the cause" (which continues to change from searching for weapons of mass destruction that weren't there, to avenging the attacks of September 11 which Iraq had nothing to do with, to removing a dictator, to building democracy as defined by an unelected president, to fighting a "global war on terror" — but never, never for the cause of oil). And, like the "soldiers" who write in this wonderful publication from their juvenile hall and prison cells, the young men and women do what they're told. And we "good people" debate, and we elect, and we pour money into their pockets, and we greet them as great leaders, and we laugh at their jokes.

So, what do we want of the least among us, the impoverished ghetto dwellers, the ones who pay the price for the causes they fight and die for, but have no role in creating?

Whether Russian's President Putin is the thug he appears to be or not, (and whether our President Bush and Vice-President Cheney are the money hungry thugs they appear to be or not), how is it that we're able to laugh at murder — or, more accurately, at SOME murders, while for others we demand the ultimate responsibility? And how do these murders and wars we fund with our taxes link to the lives we at The Beat interact with every day?

What does it do, or has it done, to us to be witness to murder at the highest levels of power, the kind that have gone on forever, for as long as human society has existed, but which have seldom been so instantly visible in the current age of instant information? The leader of the free world (dear God) ordered the invasion of Iraq, making all Americans directly responsible for the deaths of more human beings than our minds can truly comprehend (and, while governor of Texas, signed the death warrants of 152 individual people, a number we can comprehend, one-by-one). So, aren't we guilty of murder (aren't we collective murderers) for every human being we kill? President Putin kills. President Bush kills. We kill. But it is you, who make this the unique publication that it is, that we lock up to make you "responsible" for your actions...

We reward the robber barons of our day, the thieves who steal hundreds of millions of dollars (because having millions is the measure of success in this country, however you got it). We reward those who send our children into battle, paying them handsomely, even applauding their most inarticulate, even simple-minded speeches. We set them up for a lifetime of leisure after they leave their high offices. That's at the top.

We deal at the bottom. The bottom is where a child of 14 can be sent to live in prison for the rest of his life for doing what we can laugh at when done by those at the top. The bottom is where the impoverished of the world live, whether in Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East, or in the war zones of East Oakland, East Palo Alto and the Western Addition in San Francisco. They are the dispossessed, the throw-aways, the unconnected — except how they connect with each other through religion, gangs, family. The bottom is without resources, without respect, without successful role models, without hope (though with grandiose dreams). And, ironically, they are the ones we hold to a standard of personal responsibility for their acts of violence, while excusing, dismissing, laughing at and rewarding far greater acts of violence committed by the elites.

We at The Beat more than encourage, we exhort our young writer/readers to accept personal responsibility for their behavior, to exercise self-control and self-discipline, to change themselves and, in the process, save themselves. And they read what we say, and they look around, and they see the same world we see. And they know.

What can we say to those who, like that 15-year-old Beat writer who models his behavior on that of the OGs (and President Bush is THE OG of OGs)? He points to their unwillingness to accept responsibility to justify his own irresponsibility. What can we say to him and to all of our writers, except to tell them that they will die early or spend years as slaves in the largest prison empire in the world unless they change (and, if you quibble with the characterization of them as "slaves," read the 13th Amendment to the Constitution). What can we say? That the Bible teaches love? (Some of the most hate-filled rhetoric around is pumped by Bible quoting "Christians.") That there is salvation in Islam, when Sunni murders Shia and Shia murders Sunni? That being responsible means respecting each other? That true humanity requires us to recognize the universal humanity in all of us? Yes, we say all this and more, and we see their eyes roll back in that "Give-me-a-break" way.

As we survey the landscape, as we look closely at what this country claims it stands for ("Liberty and justice for all"), and weigh its slogans against the reality of the largest prison empire in the world inhabited by the poorest, least educated and most disadvantaged in the land, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that our hypocrisy has already poisoned our own land beyond repair. That we have bought into our own 1984 "Doublespeak" so thoroughly that we see no gaping disconnect when we tell kids how to act "right" while the rest of us act the same way they do — only we're able to do it behind refined doors and by using established institutions of power and control. We rob, steal and kill, but we do it with finesse. We kill in good taste...

This is not to say that every kid in our Beat family will continue "a life of crime." In fact, we take immense pride in those who make a conscious decision not to act as they have in the past, not to act as they have been conditioned to act by the brutalizing social/economic structures they're born into and forced to endure. But those individual "success stories" cannot overcome the bigger picture, which still breaks down as "us" and "them."

The us — privileged, mostly white, over-educated, with concrete dreams of a future rooted in our own economic power — do not have to be held to an ethic of personal responsibility. We are society's winners, and winners never have to justify themselves.

But society's losers — the "them" — must pay a price (usually years of their lives) for arranging their own desperate "society" along capitalist principles (money loving, voracious, take-no-prisoners, win-at-all-costs) — principles that we applaud when they result in riches for "us" (even if it means that certain human beings were necessarily exploited, abused or even killed for our "success").

Until the "bottom" rises up in righteous (or unrighteous) indignation, and rips what's left of the fabric of our society to shreds (the fire next time), we at the "top" will keep clicking our tongues and wagging our fingers as if in moral superiority. And we will claim shock and incomprehension when that fire arrives, as it almost certainly will. "We" are sowing the seeds of our national destruction, and "they" know.

And yet... and yet... We are left with only our words, which remain true, despite everything we've written here. You (few) who are reading this, our words remain the same: You will die early or spend years as slaves in the largest prison empire in the world unless you change...

Change... this is what we want of our children. Change for yourselves, change for your families, change for your 'hoods and barrios, change for your country, change for your world, change for your God, and change for us all.

Speaking of change, lets get to the topics at hand and then we'll get to your writings! The topics for issue 12.07 are, "Given A Break" —Have you ever been given a break by the cops? Was there ever a time when the police could have arrested you, but chose to let you go with a warning? Have you ever heard a police officer saying something like: "This time we'll let you go, but if we catch you again, you're going down." What were the circumstances that led to this warning? How did you feel when it happened? Did you take this opportunity to change, or did you just go back to the same thing? Most importantly, why do you think that officer gave you this chance, and what do you think it means?

The second topic, "Crack And My Community"- Crack cocaine started flooding the US in the early '80s, before any of you was even born. Since it's been around for as long as you have been around, does it seem normal to you? Can you imagine what life was like before crack invaded your community, or what life would be like if it were to disappear from your community? How has the drug affected your community, your neighborhood, your education, your homies, your family — and you? Tell The Beat how this powerful drug has affected your life, and what you think should be done about it.

Lastly, (the already long forgotten)Super Bowl, 2007–Super Bowl 2007 will be played on Sunday, February 4. Who do you think will win, Chicago or Indianapolis? Who do you want to win? Why?

Before you flip the page, lets praise this week's POW writers, they are Angel, Eric, Lil' Larry, Serina, Big Vic, Ant, all from the 150 Crew. From Arizona we have Marco and two from Lil' Man. From SF/YGC we have Dexter, Edmond, and D. Last but not least we have Uriel from Santa Cruz.

We thank you writers for stepping up as leaders and sharing your thoughts and stories with us all!

All right this issue goes out to the staff in the hall who have helped in making this program so successful. You staff know who we're talking about! And you readers ask how does staff already know, well simple, by showing us respect and giving us support each week when we come through to conduct our weekly workshops, giving us the floor to do our forty-five minute to an hour workshops, not being loud and obnoxious and recognizing how important The Beat Within is to most of the young people sitting here tonight. With that said, we are confident that with the counselors shift change and others simply moving to other units, The Beat Within will remain the fixture that it has been for over twelve years and running. See you next week!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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PIECES OF THE WEEK

Crack and Any Low-Job-Rate Community

I am not justifying or promoting the sale or use of crack, but a lot of areas in which low-income jobs aren't even available due to a person's past or [lack of] education — and if they are available, a person can hardly get by in any case — a young person will resort to the sale of crack. In some cases that person selling crack will make close to, or in many case more than, a lawyer or doctor makes in a month or a year.

There are vast varieties of people that ultimately make the decision to sell crack. Some are people that just want to buy fancy things that they normally would not be able to buy with a low-paying inner-city job. Some people have families but are racially profiled or have a criminal history that prevents them from getting an honest job, which, as I have pointed out, due to low pay will often drive a man into supplementing his come in order to adequately support his family "by any means necessary"!

Some people rob and pimp as a means to get by. Others decide to "run a business", although most dealers are usually set in situations where soon someone becomes jealous of how successful they are with their business at that location. And that's when a dealer feels the "true necessity" of committing murder, not because he is cold-blooded but because that person supporting his family cannot afford to end up a dead man — because a dead man can't support his family!

But back to the "means" of providing: If a person from a low-income area isn't able to find a means to provide for or meet those "extra needs" of his family without extra income, and he doesn't want to sell crack for whatever reason, he will be tempted to do it by pimping or by selling some other drug — most certainly the community will see an increase in people with high-paying jobs getting robbed! Thus, it may be argued, that crack sales keep other crime rates lower.

-Angel, 150 Crew

From The Beat:** Your conclusion makes it hard to believe you are not promoting crack sales, or at least trying to persuade those with high-paying jobs in the community that ignoring crack sales on the street is in their best interest. The plight of families trying to support themselves through multiple low-paying jobs, and the plight of those who are excluded from even these low-paying jobs because of a criminal record, poor education or old-fashioned racism and/or classism, you present clearly and well. Why not address these issues directly? If America can spend trillions on an opportunistic war overseas, surely it can afford to spend sizeable sums to create (legal and legitimate) economic opportunities poverty-stricken communities here at home! Opponents of American involvement in what has become an Iraqi civil war, like Barack Obama, are calling for exactly this sort of social and government commitment to our inner cities. Of course, we understand that your argument implies and assumes that such optimism is misplaced and will never become a reality in the streets, and you may be right. However, statistics show not a decrease in other crimes in areas where crack is openly sold, but a dramatic increase in other crimes. Despite the logic of your argument economically, socially the breakdown of respect for the law and the savagery of gun-toting business competition leads to an increase in violent crimes and a decrease in respect for the value of a human life. Knocks like prostitutes are reduced to sources of personal income, stripped of human dignity and physically abused when they do not "pay off". The link between exploiting knocks and exploiting so-called "rippers, runners" or whatever, is psychological, and the psychology of exploitation is by no means exclusive to logical categories such as "drug sales" versus "flesh sales" — and both reek of neo-slavery, first in the street and then in the prison-industrial complex the criminal underground feeds like a river. With all that said, you are an articulate and intelligent voice we welcome to our pages. We challenge you to go deeper in bringing freedom and economic prosperity to the street while freeing victims of poverty from their cages! Don't quit, go legit.

Crack and My Community

Crack in my community and also in my life, has affected me a lot! My mom is addicted to crack and may other types of drugs.

My mom being addicted has caused many emotional problems and physical problems in my life. If I go outside, I see people with their moms, fathers, parents and grandparents, but I don't see mine — because she is always locked up for smoking dope.

I can't wish that crack was gone because it helps people survive out on the streets, people who can't get jobs and so sell crack, really support their kids or themselves.

It has taken me seventeen years to finally forgive my mother for not being there for me. I now see how the addiction has pulled her further and further away from her family. If my mother had taken up a less heavy drug, like weed, then I can picture her being a functional addict. Shoot, I would enjoy smoking with her, too!

But most of all, crack has played an important role in my life and community — and from what I see, it is not good.

-Eric, 150 Crew

From The Beat:** Clearly locking your mother up did not help her beat her addiction. Either she beats her addiction or her addiction will keep beating her. Statistics show that substituting one drug for another doesn't really work. They used to treat heroin addiction by having addicts drink beer, 'cause they were thinking along the same lines you do in this piece only you suggest weed. They found two things happening: (1) the high from the other drug seemed to eventually lead the addict back to their "drug of choice"; and (2) they created a whole lot of alcoholics who may have been marginally more functional but dying of liver disease is no fun (and as we all know, there are a lot of "mean" drunks who abuse their families, etc.). Maybe you're not addicted to weed (if you can't stop smoking when you're on probation, we'd say that you are addicted though), but smoking with your mom if she ever gets clean is a terrible idea, even smoking around her. If you really want to support her getting clean, get clean yourself — show her that you don't need to crutch of a drug, 'cause her drug started as a crutch and had her crawling soon enough. Still, major props on finding the compassion to forgive her, 'cause addiction is a serious disease that seizes an addict body, mind and soul — only by getting clean can they begin the journey to becoming themselves again, and to ones they loved and hurt begin to make amends.

Where I'm From

youngstas and oh-gees posted on the same block
tryin'a get money so they all tryin'a serve a knock
police pull up and dudes start to kickin' rocks
but they will be back in a minute 'cause they scared to box
loud music playing and cars going a hundred m-p-h
dudes got a gun so now they think they got some power
up and down the street day and night doing the same thing
tryin'a get money so they can buy some bling-bling
it's about ten ninjas outside in front of the store
been there they' whole life with nowhere to go
girls and my brahs in the neighborhood where i be
posted outside walking up and down my street
pow — one shot to his head and it's ovah
but he lived his life to the fullest like a street soldier
scrapers and gold grill in the 'hood be hyphy
some ninjas that used to get punked all grown up now they sheisty
i know everybody don't like me
but i'm too solid to let ninjas pull me down

-Lil' Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat:** Your portrait of the street is accurate, but we were surprised by your conclusion. Claiming that youngster who got his dome blown apart had lived his life to the fullest maybe shows you've got heart — but a head full of confusion. He didn't live to see his kids born or watch their first haircut when the curls get shorn. He didn't get to feel the love of a father for his child, or understand what it is to give up living wild for the sake of love. He didn't get to buy his child a bike, walk the youngest to school — or when a nightmare strikes, help his child feel all right, safe 'cause daddy's there to show he cares. He didn't get to see his child get his high school degree or hold his wife as she cries happily. He didn't get to see his grandchildren 'cause his hyphy life led to his untimely killing in the street. It's not life to the fullest but a full-blown tragedy. Get solid with reality before you're the next fatality.

about ten ninjas outside in front of the store
been there they' whole life
with nowhere to go

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Life

Today I want to talk about life, and what it means to you youngsters out there in the streets doing what you have to, to survive, or just playing stupid – so you can earn a placaso (name) for your varrio. That is on you, that is you living the vida loca – your crazy life.

I want to tell you one thing, and to be straight up with you. I don't really care about you, or what you do. I just want to let you know what it will get you into – living with a gun in your hands. First of all, it is no joke. The way I look at it, a gun never saves a life in a fight. But I always said to myself that I would rather carry it and not use it, than to need it and not have it. That is the stupidest thing I have ever thought.

But guess what... I am facing a life sentence. I don't know yet, but that is most likely what I am going to get. And for what? For having a good time with the girls. Think about it.

I left my family crying. I have a daughter, and she will not play with her dad. This is just not right. So think about it when you think about a gun, because you just might be sitting here with me.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We hope your piece is read by many and that your warning is taken seriously. And we hope you receive some leniency in the courts. We know you regret the pain you've caused. If you are given a break how will you use your time/freedom when you get it back? Keep teaching my friend, we need your voice in The Beat Within to help the next generation hear loud and clear that the criminal justice system is no joke!

The Man In The Mirror

As I look in the mirror I see a man, but not just any man,
A man that is full of pain and sorrow!
A man that's lived a hard life, not because he wanted to,
but because that's all he knew!
As I look into his eyes I see them full of remorse for what
he has done!
I see a man that has fear, but not fear itself,
fear of letting his family down,
fear of becoming a failure.
He has the intentions of doing good,
but feels as if his best ain't enough.
So he goes back to his old ways and ends up letting his
family down once again.
He looks at himself in the mirror and realizes the man in
the mirror is "you".

-Marco, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Marco, you express remorse as you look back over your life. You mention that you are a man of pain and sorrow with fears and failures, but we see so much more. We see a talented young man, asking important questions and willing to take risks to expose his inner struggles. Is it possible you could use the inner struggles you face to empower you to greater heights in your artistic outlets? What can you learn from your failures to move you one step closer to being the man you want to be? Failures and setbacks can be life's lessons on the path to success, if you learn from them. You're at a fork on that path and you can either choose to live the setbacks or learn from them. We wonder what direction you'll choose.

The CIA Created Crack And AIDS

Crack and AIDS are a product of the CIA. Just looking at it, it's so easy to see how it (crack) spread in the colored community. Look at AIDS, how it only kills the undesirable gays, blacks, Asians, Latinos. I don't see a lot of rich white people with AIDS. Also crack is hella easy to make, and it kills people in the inner city.

I think the system is run by the white man to control the colored man's neck in institutionalized racism. I believe the CIA created the AIDS virus in the '50s to kill off the undesirables--the homosexuals, Blacks, Latinos, Asians. I feel that the colored people will prevail, especially in the 21st century.

I need to see the world, to go back to Africa to see my family with my roots, seeing the world, getting my education, goin' to college, majoring in history, getting my bachelor's to my PhD.

-Dexter U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The reason you don't see a lot of rich white people with AIDS is because rich white people have lots of places to hide, and not because they don't get it. A virus doesn't care what color you are, how much money you have, or who you have sex with. If you're exposed, you get it. So, we can't go along with your reasoning on the AIDS virus. At the same time, we have read this argument before, and we have to tell you that although we don't agree with it, you MIGHT be right, and that is scary to think about. We know too much about history (and how Black men were allowed to die of syphilis in an "experiment" 75 years ago when the cure was easily available) to dismiss what you say. Your argument about bringing crack into the ghetto is a much stronger one, because that is something that is easily controlled, and someone is making huge amounts of money, and that doesn't include anyone locked up in juvenile hall. They're making peanuts, and risking everything. Plus, there is enough documentation of this allegation that we don't find it difficult to believe at all. But the most important things you say have nothing to do with whether you're right or wrong about AIDS and crack, and everything to do with the wonderful goals you've set for yourself. Yes, see Africa and as much of the rest of the world as you can. Get a view of the world from outside the country, and expand your knowledge by travel, by reading, be observing, by listening. And, of course, by going to college and learning history. (Have you read a book called "A People's History of the U.S." by Howard Zinn? We think you'd like it.) We don't know what brought you into this place, but it's clear that you don't have to be here, and should never allow it to happen again!

A Piece of My Truth

what is it like to be me
what is it like to live in denial
at only fourteen to turn against the world and do as you
please
now i look at the life i could've had
wishing i could take it all back
make things turn out differently
now i suffer this misery
by livin' in a juvenile facility
whoever thought i would become a "ho"
i should've listened to my family when they said for me to
come back
but i was too busy makin' money out on that ho-stroll track
i ignored their cries but more importantly the cry in myself
i realized there was nothing wrong with them
they just wanted to help
but i was unsure what to do with the cards i was dealt
i realize now that i do need to change my route
and figure out what life's really about
legit' money, a real boyfriend who will love you
not one who sells your stuff and says he do
my mom always wanted to see me succeed
she's no longer here but i'm'a fulfill that dream
so i'm'a get it together, enroll in school and do
the best i know i can do
(r i p christine, 03/15/71—12/27/02 ...
the true fallen angel that was sent back to heaven)

-Serina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hope you get to see this issue with your piece in it. Yeah, you did make the wrong choice, and you kept making it every day you stayed with that pimp posing as a boyfriend. But you're not the first young woman, still a girl really, to have been tricked out by that so-called easy money — now you know there's nothing easy about it 'cause you pay later with pain and suffering! If we understand correctly, Christine is your mother, the angel in heaven watching over you and praying for the best in all you choose to do, but also praying that you choose more wisely than you used to. Girl, you can do it, get back in school and continue to improve your mind and your future. Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery — all you have is today. So stick to what you say and fulfill your mother's dream day by day, the slow but sure way! And thanks for writing this difficult and inspirational piece, 'cause chasing that so-called easy money is a mental and spiritual disease — by keeping it real in what you say, you help others heal whose lives got infected the same way.

My Story, My Truth

"All right, you all, I'm gonna cut, 'bout to go walk around for a lil' bit. I'll get at you tomorrow, late," (or so I thought).

I take my walk down the hall and see 'them,' the 'enemy.' It has to be at least ten of them. "Crap," I say to myself. I look back to see if any of the homeboys are close, which they're not. "Oh well," I say to myself, and throw away the white tee (shirt) I got around my neck. I tighten my belt a lil' bit tighter. As I reach the end of the hallway, one of them lets go of his girl's hand and squares up. I laugh it off.

Then, the security guard begins to drill me with questions. "Why are you back here? What do you want? What class you got?"

I tell him I'm on my way home and he doesn't believe me one bit.

He demands me to go to the office.

I say, "I will" and begin my walk to the Dean's office to be drilled with more questions and possibly face an unjustified suspension.

Two of them block my path and said something that sounded like, "We're going to get you."

That's it. I've had it with all these threats I've been receiving. My conscience seems to not be present at the moment. I take a swing on the smaller one and stumble him back a little, then a quick right to the other one. A couple more punches and I began to feel the blows that begin to rain on the back of my head. I turn, and with one good right hook, I drop my attacker. I feel a slight shove from the back and I jump over the fallen guy's body and lean up against the fence. It has to be at least five who begin towards me, so I swing, swing like I've never done before, swing like my life depended on it 'cause in a way, it actually is: A lone coyote among a pack of hungry lions.

I see more of them coming and I begin to panic. I am most sure I can handle all of then one-on-one, but the numbers are not on my side at the moment.

I see a knife in the distance, so I pull out the one I have in my pocket. I begin to swing it wildly towards my attackers. Seconds later, I see blood on my long, white tee I got on. Then, I look up and see one of them bloodied up and then another holding his gut with blood flowing through his hands. I drop the knife and the security guard rushes me. He slams me to the fence and one of them begins to hit me. I push off and he retreats. Once again, the security guard slams me against the fence. He twists my arm behind my back and leads me to the office.

I get stares from all the other kids at the school. I feel like I'm on the red carpet and they are the paparazzi. Their stares are of confusion and maybe even disgust. It was my own little walk of shame.

That was then; this is now, some three hundred and forty days later. That's the reason why I have been incarcerated since March 1st, 2006. It is now a whole new year. It felt like a dream, all the blood rushing through my body, my heart beating a mile a minute, and my mind going blank, but it wasn't a dream. It really did happen and I'm really here.

I had court today and I pleaded guilty. I am a little sad in a way because I sort of admitted defeat. Me, one who has pride in all he does, is ashamed of what I did. I go a lot off my charges dropped, but still got nine years and two strikes hangin' over my head. It doesn't mean I'll do all that, but the strikes hurt the most. No more getting high, shootin', fightin', none of that. One slip up and I'll be gone for life.

Although I have a tremendous amount of respect for you Beat Without writers, I don't want to be one. At least not one doing life. I can't be mad though, because I chose to live the life I led, always the one to walk on the wild side. I guess my past caught up with me and in a hurry.

Also, at least they (the courts) aren't goin' to be chargin' me in adult court. That was a big relief, and to get many of the charges and enhancements dropped, I can't be mad. The thing that hurts the most is seeing my parents visibly getting tired and older because of this ordeal. All the struggling they went through to better my life and looked where I ended up!

I'm not really sure what I'm feeling for myself at the moment. It's so mixed up. I'm not sad at all, though. I can't be. I'm not happy, not mad. It's hard to describe.

Since March 3rd, they have been putting me through hell with all these postponement of my court days, so to finally get some news is a huge relief. Whether it be bad or good, I finally know how much time I got or my maximum time.

I go to court again on February 27th for my actual sentencing. By then, I will pretty much have a calendar under my belt. Damn, long, long time.

Some days, I lose my temper. I snap and get in a state of mind that I can't control, but that's why I'm here: 'Cause of my temper. I've been leaning to control it and one way is by writing, but at times, I can't. I love the feeling of all the blood rushing through me and the adrenaline rush of fighting, but I can't live with this. Just like any drug, it's addictive. I have to conquer my demons within myself. I have to be pleased with myself before I please others. I guess you can say I changed my life since I've been here, but I'm still the same, ol' me. I just hide my "true" self better now and only let it come out when it's truly necessary.

Every thing happens for a reason. I'm not sure why I wrote this piece. Maybe to let people know a little about me that they wouldn't know through my poetry. Maybe I might catch a younger guy's attention before he does something similar to what I did. Maybe just to let it out. "Before you judge me for what I became, I only ask that you take the time to fully understand what I was forced to become.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Vic, this piece is the reason why there is a Beat. You are The Beat Within. You step up, not just this week, but over the past year, and tell us many readers why and how your life became the way it is. You recognize the problems. You feel the sadness you put your family through. You give us readers a taste of what life is like locked up for a year, possibly being tried as an adult. You write how you made a choice that cost you two strikes and a chunk of time. You stress that you do not want to be a lifer writing for The Beat Without, and you know what, we believe you. We don't want to see you writing in The Beat Within for years and years either. You know what we want? We want you to work with us! We want you to return someday to juvenile hall and touch lives. We want you to go to college! We want you to continue to make a difference in your community. We see you on your way to being a success! You're a good man, coming to terms with your life, and the great news is in due time you will be back home.

My Life Before Juvenile Hall

Before I came here, I thought I was the boss. I was messing up in school, disobeying my parents, hanging with a bunch of bad people, and not coming home. Now I had time to think while I'm staying at juvy.

I now know that my life isn't about fun and games. God has been trying to tell me to get serious, but I hadn't listened, so He sent me here to let me think about my life, and I learned my lesson.

When I'm outta here, I'm gonna be a brand new person. I'm gonna do better in school, listen to my parents, because I've now know how much they care about me. I'm gonna dress more casual and quit smoking.

-Edmond U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We often ask, when young people write that they are praying to God to get out, whether they are also listening to what God is praying to them. So it makes us very happy to read a piece by someone who is listening and not just asking for something. If you follow through on the promises you make in this wonderful piece — and especially going to school and listening to your caring parents — you will be moving a long, long towards responsible adulthood, leaving the child who let himself lose his freedom to an uncaring system far behind. Keep moving in the direction you're now traveling, and you'll be amazed how far you can go!

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Putting In Work

My name is David
but everyone calls me Lil' Man.
I did some stupid stuff
in my life and now I regret
I got jumped in a gang
when I was fifteen years old.
I put in work for one year,
but I seen so much shit go down
that I guess want to get out.
But I know if I can't get out soon,
I'll be in it for life.
But I'm going to stop gangbanging
because it will not get me anywhere
but six feet deep or in penitentiary.
Now I'm sixteen
going to be seventeen years old on April 23.
I'm trying to get my life together
before I lose my life
and end up laying in my casket
buried six feet deep
with my family all around me crying.
Do you want to be the one running with a gang?
Gangbanging, putting in work?
I'll tell you something that gangster mentality will always ride
And put you all in your place.
If you just stop you all won't have to go under.
If you keep gangbanging watch where you roll,
You maybe not believe me just watch,
I'm telling you this because I already seen it
Some of my homies are in a penitentiary.
That's why I'm not going to be banging
any more,
I'm just going to keep it real
telling you the truth
If you don't want to die,
you need to stop wanting to ride.
I can't tell you what to do, it's your life
Live it how you want to that's all I got to say.
But I'm through with that gang life.

-Lil' Man, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: It takes a lot of courage to do what you wanna do...walk away from that life of crime and violence. We give you props for calling it like it is and not making excuses for the choices you have made. It appears that you are willing to be open-minded and look at how your choices are affecting your future opportunities. You write often about the truth of life on the streets, the dangers and dead ends, so what is it that you want to pursue? Where will you begin? We encourage you to pursue an education or vocational training. You have mentioned to us in the past that you are passionate about working on/with/around cars...so maybe that would be a good area to begin pursuing a new way of life. If we want something different to happen we must begin by doing something different. Sounds like you're ready to do something different.

It Ain't Cool

my neighborhood ain't cool
i can't even walk down the street
with my mom
without a knock asking me if i
have any coke
and that's just a shame
it should not be like that
at all
because little kids are going to
see that easy money and
going to sell coke

-Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You tell it as simply and clearly as it can be said, which, in case you didn't know, is the essence of poetry — the mark and defining characteristic of the best lyric poetry, and the most powerful. How you bring the meaning home in such a short poem — is amazing! Man, we'd like to see it on a billboard! It could do more toward making it stop than an army of cops.

This Life

As I was a thug running the streets,
Thought it was tight earning stripes, busting at fools.
At the time I was crazy
Getting shot at was an every day thinrg,
But now, since I got away from those ninjas living that thug life
My life has been better.
Now I'm on the right path and I don't have to bust back
But I want to tell you little something about that thug life
The only place that it will get you is 12 feet under, maybe 6 feet if y'all lucky,
You know what I mean.
Out there earning your stripes representing that thug life
But when you hit the prison walls
you wanta cry.
Why ain't y'all crying when y'all out there killing each other
For what you believe is a gang but it is just a group for people
That believes in one thin'.
That's why I'm not living that thug life any more, I'm riding solo.

-Lil' Man, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat:
Life on the streets
Bodies covered with sheets
Dodging bullets everyday
Futures looking gray
Caught stealing cars
Crying behind bars
Taking, refusing to give
No way to live
Intensity to the extreme
What does it all mean?
Earning stripes or a death sentence?
Hearts broken, doing penance
What does tomorrow hold?
Bloody sidewalks or streets of gold?
Lil' Man you want something more
Realizing life isn't just "how to score"
Breaking the cycle you're in
You are sure to win. Great piece!

Crack And My Community

Man, what's with da Beat? Man, crack... Let's see... If there wasn't no crack around right now, I think that our 'hood — or as they say "communities" — would be a better place because where I'm from there are a lot of crack heads and they just be always lookin' to get high. They kids be a poor and shhh.

But if there wasn't no crack, it would be a whole lot better. But also that's how some people make they money too, because it's fast money. So if there wasn't no crack, people would have to find new ways to get their money.

Plus, if there wasn't no guns in the streets, there would be less black brothas gettin' kill by the gun. 'Cause if ya fight, y'all could make up in the long run. But if you kill that brotha, y'all ain't go never get the chance to make up... Never! But guns, they only can promise you two things in this world. One is somebody gettin' killed, because if you got a gun, you go use it and nine times out of ten, somebody's going to get killed. And the other one is life in jail for killing someone.

-D U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This piece shows us two things right off. First, the spelling mistakes you make tell us that you haven't spent enough time in the classroom learning what you need to learn. But second, the thinking in this piece tells us that you have a first-class mind, a brain that can take you far from where you are now to destinations you can't even imagine. So what we want to know, DB, is how far from your present circumstances you want to go, and how can you put your brain to its best use to take you there? That old saying about "A mind is a terrible thing to waste" is too true, and especially when God has blessed you with a mind worth gold... What are your plans for your own life's future? We emphasize the word "plan," which is much more than just hope and desire. We all hope. We all desire. But those who achieve their hopes and desires make real plans. What are yours?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Shopliftin' at Southland

The day started out good. I was stayin' with my patna and just put on some clean-ass Scarface Air Forces. It was a Saturday and we had nothing to do. So me and her boyfriend decided to go to the mall.

There we are in Macys, and you know I see some rings. And I remember I don't got no more rings 'cause they got left behind in the group home I cut from. So I snatch them! And as I'm walking out, I feel a tap — and they say, "Come with me." They gave me a chance to give the rings back, and I lied and said, "I don't have it."

The man handcuffed me and took me to the back. I started crying, and now I gave the ring back also. I told the lady, "If the cops come, then I have to go to a group home. So don't call!" But they wasn't having it. So I decided to start cussin' them out! The cop came, and really there's no point to lie about your name. So I told him, and he ran it and then asked me who can come pick me up.

I was thinking for sure I would be going to the Assessment Center, but he asked for my Nana's number — and she came and picked me up, telling me how lucky I was! The policeman didn't want to take me to the Assessment Center because he thought I should work it out with the family. So I went home with her that night, so happy to get outta those cuffs!

-Serena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a great story of how a person in authority, the policeman, decided to give you a second chance, letting you go home with your "nana" to work it out in the family! We can feel your relief as the cuffs came off and you went home, but what we want to know is: Did you work it out? What did your nana ask of you? And what did you do? Did you take advantage of this chance or did you waste it? You're being released soon, so let us know how you're doing with this one more second chance to get your life together. We know from your other piece this week that you're serious about making changes and getting your life headed in the right direction (a direction that leads away from court and court placements). Right on! But write us and let us know how you're doing (our address is at the bottom of page three of every issue; address it to one or our staff or editors listed above on the same page).

Having It, Losing It, And Getting It Back

Before being locked up in juvenile hall I had a good life going for me. I had a job working at See's candies, had a good family who cares about me and a girlfriend who has been there for me since I met her, had my license, had a car... had everything going good for me. All of a sudden I decide to go out with some bad friends of mines who always get in trouble and always getting locked up.

I don't know why I did what I did while I was with them, but all I can do now is take full responsibility for what I did and just want to see what's going to happen in court. I really don't want to get sent away to the Ranch because my dad is in the hospital and he is going to have surgery on his neck with a very bad sickness. I just want to get out to be there for him.

I also miss my girlfriend a lot. I think about her all day every day that I'm in here and my family and friends. I am also the only driver in the house who drive my parents and family around.

-Jay Jay U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The part of what you've written that we hope you think most about is, "I don't know why I did what I did..." When you had so much going for you, and you let it all slip away in a moment, it's worth looking at the reasons why. Maybe you were just a foolish child at that moment, or maybe you sabotaged yourself for other reasons (like not thinking yourself worthy of all that was going good in your life). Whatever the reasons, we hope you spend some time thinking about them. You have let a lot of people down by your actions, but mostly yourself. We know you can get all of this back, and more, but you have to exercise some self-discipline not to allow negative peers to drag you down. And one more thing, if you get that job back at See's candy, we'd like a little payola for all this good advice!

To Shirley: I Love You

I remember the first time we met
It was a dark cold night that I will never forget,
Stow Lake was the first place where we first laid eye to eye
And it was also the first place and day that I saw you cry
Even though you had tears falling down your beautiful face
I will always be there when you are having your terrible days
You will always have a shoulder when you feel sad or want to cry
Because I will be the one that stays by your side

I remember I took you to Twin Peaks and it was your first
Rushed from my house, excited to pick you up from church
In my mind, I dreamed that it was only you and me at the top
Imagine like it was our own secret hiding spot
Looking into your beautiful eyes, holding you when you were cold
While viewing the city like we were on top of the world

The day was October Twenty-Six
And I still remember the first time we kissed
It was like looking at an Angel that's pulling me closer and closer
I can feel my heart pumping harder and faster
And I knew at that very moment, things will be different
So I took my chances and kissed your soft lips
There babe, I just said that I came on to you
But you have to admit that you wanted that to happen too
It was also the first day we become more than just best friends
You are now my soul, my world, my angel, my princess
My day had ended with a big smile on my face too
Because I finally got to say the three special words to you

Now, please forgive me when I write this part
It's so tough that I don't even know where to start
I'm here locked up at YGC for something I didn't do
And I'm truly sorry for missing our anniversary — not one, but two
Tried calling, write letters, and talk to friends just to hear from you
But there was no solution, so I laid on my bed thinking what should I do
I've been locked up for a month and still counting
Don't even know when I will be out and see the real world again

Once I'm out, I won't be coming back into the system
Because I don't want to be caged up and think about what I am about to be missing
So babe, I hope you had fun on your vacation
Because when you and I meet again in person
We will be watching the sunrise, holding each other tight
Looking into each other's eyes and finally say:
"I love you" once again

-Monkey U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't usually give such high props to love poems, but this is so thoughtful, and tells us so much — and we're writing this response on Valentine's Day — that we had to give you credit for a wonderful and loving poem. There's one thing we don't understand, though. You say you're here for something you didn't do, but you also say that you won't be coming back into the system when you get out. But if you're here for something you didn't do, how do you know that won't happen again? We assume, when you say you won't be coming back, that you plan to make certain changes in your life to keep that promise. What are they?

The man handcuffed me and took me to the back. I started crying. . .

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Saga of Crack Cocaine

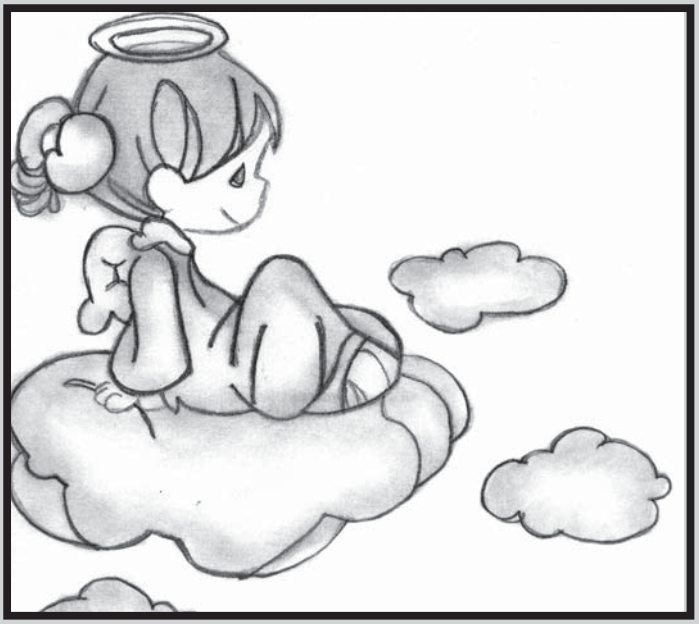
Ever since I was a little kid I've seen drugs take chunks out of the community time after time and nobody tries to help or stop it. They just write novels about it and get rich.

I have family members whose lives have been destroyed by crack cocaine and are just starting to get their lives together ten years later.

I've seen a lot of things happen because of that drug and I don't think the saga of crack cocaine will end any time soon.

-Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those folks you know who are getting their lives together must be so inspiring, facing their darkest demons. We hope you get to watch them succeed or even help them – or maybe they'll help you get out of this hall mess. The solution definitely won't come from outside the community, it's gotta come from the inside.



Lots Of Breaks From The Cops

I have been given a break by the cops many times. A few times that really stick out to me are: I was sitting with a couple of friends, smoking some meth. An officer that knew my friends and me, walked up and caught us hittin' the pipe. We all thought we were getting arrested. All she did was tell us to leave. That was after she searched us and found money, drugs, and baggies.

Another time was when a group of my friends and I were sitting in a park and a few cops came up and caught us doing a deal. The cop was again one who knew us pretty well. He told us not to do it in the park where there are families and kids. He let us go with everything.

Another time is when my ex-boyfriend got arrested and he was in cuffs and passed me all this money, drugs, stolen cell phones and bags right in front of him (the cop.) I always felt like I was invincible and that I could get away with everything. Let's just say I learned my lesson.

-Sara, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is a well-written description of those "breaks" you got from the cops. But we wonder if they were really breaks, or just kept you going down the same destructive hole. It seems like the cops have only two options — arrest you and throw you behind bars or let you go with a warning. Wouldn't it be nice if the problem of drug use was handled in the health care system instead of the criminal justice system so that professionals would have some positive options? How long have you been clean and sober? We hope the lesson you've learned is that it's better to have a clear mind and be able to think, than to taint your mind and body as you were.

Two Roads

I'm on a bumpy, muddy, dark and lonely road and I wonder how I got myself here. I wonder how, but I know when. It was such an easy transition from the smooth and paved road to where I'm at now.

Well, the point that now I find myself struggling to get back to the smooth ride, but it's hard. I realize now that is so easy to mess up and so hard to do good. But I have a motive... my son. I love you. I miss you.

-Baby D U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When we read this, we immediately thought of the great poem, "The Road Not Taken," by the American poet Robert Frost who write it nearly a hundred years ago. It's too long to quote all of it here, but here are the first and last stanzas: "two roads diverged in a yellow wood/And sorry I could not travel both/And be one traveler, long I stood/And looked down one as far as I could/To where it bent in the undergrowth;/ I shall be telling this with a sigh/Somewhere ages and ages hence:/Two roads diverged in a wood, and I — I took the one less traveled by/And that has made all the difference."

No Matter What

I have been in this place two weeks now and it hasn't gotten better. I went out with this one girl and she was lying to me. I couldn't take her stories any more, so I broke up with her. A month later this girl is talking to all my friends about me behind my back, and even where I can see it on myspace.com. I found out and so did my friend, who happened to have went out with the same girl before me. I felt bad, but besides that, I was mad and heated, so I three-way called her with my friend and cussed her out. My friend actually had the nerve in him to threaten her with her life.

The next day, I take the blame and end up getting arrested and coming to YGC straight out of school. She said that I threatened her and some other shhh and bs to the cops. I couldn't believe it. She was getting back at me for something I have never done to her.

To all you reading this, girls like that ain't worth the time. It is, however, worth it in a different way. I stay positive and get the good out of juvy, no matter what's up. I've been able to think long and hard about myself and what I want to do in the future. I think to myself, as a regular believer in God, that He put me here for a reason, and I'll tell straight up, I learned a lot. Now combine the first and last sentence of my story to get my real message to all of ya.

Like they say, "Never judge a book by its cover," but also... never judge a girl by her looks.

-Sergey U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's hard for us to reconcile your first sentence with what you say about how much you've thought about and decided about your future since coming here. If you are using this time to light a candle to walk through the darkness (rather than spending it cursing the darkness), then this has been a positive experience for you. We're sorry you've had to go through it for someone who did you wrong, but that, too, is a learning experience. We think it's good advice not to judge a girl — or a boy — by their looks. It's what we look like inside that makes us who and what we are.

Crack

When I was fifteen years old, I started smoking crack. I'm seventeen now. I've been clean off crack for ten months. I have two kids, Leon and Ariana. I started smoking crack with my kids' grandma and aunties. They never liked me until I started smoking with them.

I think crack is a very strong drug. I wish I never started. I smoked crack when I was pregnant with my daughter. By the grace of God I still have her and my son. All I gotta say is: don't do crack or any other drug.

-Terri, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You say your grandma and aunties didn't like you until you started smoking with them, but by bringing you into their nasty little habit, they truly showed you how much they don't like you. Congratulations on your ten months of sobriety! That's a wonderful foundation to build on. But the only way you can keep adding more days and weeks and months and years to that foundation is to respect yourself more than your grandma and aunties respect you or themselves. You owe yourself and your kids nothing less!

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Lookin'

My heart's not beating
Looking in the mirror
Can't believe what I'm seeing
The good is fleeing,
But the evil remains
I'm goin' insane
Can't live with this pain
It's a struggle to stay so calm
The judge is the player
And I'm just a pawn
Has my life in his palm
Lookin', starin' deep in my eyes
Hear the cries
Steady telling lies
No trust
No love, all lust
Clock is tickin'
And the bomb is ready to bust
Lookin' at someone I don't really know
Always puttin' up a show
Don't know which way to go
Might go down
If I keep playin' around
Feel overwhelmed and I'm ready to drown
Need a buoy to keep me afloat
Need to past the moat,
But don't got a boat
Need to get to my castle, my kingdom, my home place
Where I'm not alone,
'Cause I'm really just lookin' to be grown
Lookin' to find my place
Heart's beginning to race
I'm gonna find what I'm lookin' for at any pace.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem speaks loud and clear of what it is like to be detained and having so many people judge you, from yourself, to your peers, to the judge and all in between. Why do you think the good is fleeing? Can you describe the pain you feel in words? What is it like to hear things/lies you don't agree with? We bet it is overwhelming, but if you lasted this long, we know you can make through your last court date and any time given to you. Stay strong Vic, stay being your own man!

Short One-Act Play: My Brah Ain't Know Nothin' 'Bout Ghetto

Dizzy: Yo, brah! How ya doin' around the block? Any girl you messin' with? (Laugh.) Don't think so.
Brah: Man, why you always sweat me all the time? You think you ghetto out there? What did you do while you in the street?
Dizzy: Well, you got a good point! I'm selling weed where I can get some fast money which you don't know how to do. Plus you don't know how to ghetto walk or how to smooth talk the ladies the way I do. You just like a white cat that always eating and watching TV, doing nothing! Shhh.
Brah: Man, I'll show you my ghetto ways! I can fight, talk, walk — all of that! I been watching Snoop Dogg's style, fool!
Dizzy: Fool, you acting wannabe Snoop Dogg! Shhh, do you smoke grape? Do you roll the blunt like Snoop Dogg does?
Brah: Well of course! Umm, what "grape" mean? I don't understand. You mean like a fruit?
Dizzy: See? You know nothing. Shhh, you should live with white folk not my family! You hella white! I see you is black on the outside but your inside is white!
Brah: Let me show you my way! (Lousy ghetto walk.) Nah, my bad. Let me show you my smooth talk to the ladies! (Pretends to talk to ladies.) How you doing there? Fine day! You know what I'm sayin'? Well, I see you're bored as hell, just waiting for a guy to talk to — and here I am!
Dizzy: Hahahaha! You make me laugh. I can snatch girl in a minute. You just watch me talk for like one minute.
Brah: Damn, okay, you win! I'm gon' leave you and go back where I come from.
— The End.

-Dizzy

From The Beat: We know you can act, but did you know you can write like this? In fact, we don't know which talent is stronger, your ability to act out a scene or your ability to write one. What seems to work best is putting the two together. Perhaps having a narrator explain some of the story line as you mime the piece — 'cause you are a great mime! However, pure mime pieces need to keep very simple story lines. Since you're such a good writer though, might as well have a narrator, too. One thing though, we urge you to use your drama pieces as tools to reshape your (self-)image, not floss the player qualities that brought you to lock up. You feel? Practice seeing and presenting yourself differently. And/or, have the "joke" be on the slick Dizzy, if you follow our meaning. Theater must be entertaining but it can also be educational.

Dope

I've always wanted to be like TUPAC
By putting money in my mamma
Mail Box
But now I gotta sit on my steps
Watchin lil' dudes
Sell rocks
I ain't neva sold cream, would I eva start?
No, I don't really believe in dat
Shhh
They don't think they can get a job
Or when they do
They quit
I wanna live my life to the fullest
Not runnin' around tryna dodge
Bullets
I don't wanna walk
with a pistol under my
Coat
But this the life some people live
All thanks to
Dope!

-Pooh Bear U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a fine poem, PB. We admire you for not wanting to make your money while having to run from bullets and ruining your future. So tell us, how do you plan to make your living in the future? You have a good brain and a clear mind, so how do you plan to put those gifts to use to keep yourself free and move yourself forward?

Dear Rabouin High School, New Orleans, Louisiana

Hi, my name is Melilena. I can relate to how all of you feel, because my grandma and I are from New Orleans — and our house was destroyed also. But we've been in California for thirteen years.

Yes, we heard from our families that they all moved to Baton Rouge. So maybe when I turn eighteen years old, in two years, I would love to come meet the people that don't judge the way I talk and say mean things about how my house was destroyed, etc.

I love you all and would love to hear from all of you again someday. I drew you this picture (I hope The Beat prints it with my piece), to show my thanks to all. And (whether the picture gets printed or not) everybody give thanks to The Beat Within for everything they done for all of us.

Did you hear about people moving to another part of Louisiana? I did.

See you! I have to write my family and see how they are doing. Let the Lord be with, at all times! He is watching over all of his children to keep them safe. Believe!

-Melilena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for the compliments. The Beat is not just a magazine but a community in print. The gift students that students at Rabouin High School received from The Beat is the same gift they gave others through their own writing in The Beat. Hard times can be concentrated in one place at one time, like in New Orleans since Katrina hit, but anyone who picks up a copy of The Beat anywhere in the world can feel a part of this community of young people who share their love, their suffering, their faith, their hope — the stories of their lives.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Pressure

When the pressure is on,
I don't know how to eat
My heart's beating fast
'Cause a big impact
If I get pushed
Only one way to react
An eye for an eye
To get them right back
That's the world
Never at peace
Unless somehow evil is deceased
I got too much pressure on my load
And like a balloon,
I'm ready to explode,
But I can't let it get to that point
I'll smoke my whole program like a joint
So I stay calm
Waiting for court
My life is in my palms
I can't abort
When things look down
I never do
Try not to frown,
But sometimes, I do
Tired of the responses the judge gives me
I got too much pressure
Can't anyone see?

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some can see your pressure, then again, most people, especially those in the system, only worry about themselves, and could care less about how you feel. We can only imagine the pressure you have Vic. You have the skill to write and describe that pressure, where us readers can feel this overwhelming feeling. You also have the gift to write and write and write which only helps relieve some of the pain you carry.

Love Is An Illusion

If love had a physical form, it would be the form of a woman. The way it feels so hot tender and soft all over. Once you experience it, you will never forget the warm, tingly sensation it gives you. It can make you feel on top of the world one minute, and the next you'll feel like you just fell in a ditch and you can't get out. Love is a trick and I'm not just talking about a "trick ho," I'm talking about an illusion.

Most people fall for it, but once you turn your back, it'll stab you in a quick second, no doubt about it. Love can make you feel and do crazy things, it can make you happy, it can make you angry, make you kill with a passion and do things you never done before. Don't get it twisted, there's some ride or die chicks out there and love won't always take you for granted, but me man, I'll just keep flying like birds and keep smoking -- and I'll throw away my heart so it never get broken.

-Nguyen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's about as good a description of the ups and downs of love, we ever read: On top of the world one minute, then down in a ditch the next. But of course, to be human is to love, even if that love brings pain. You say at the end that you would rather throw away your heart than have it broken.... But what would you be then, if you lost your heart? You'd lose what made you human...Also, there are different kinds of love. There's the kind of love that is more like an obsession, that bleeds you dry like a bad drug, but there's also the kind of love that makes you stronger, where you know you have someone's back –forever – and that person has your back – forever. Have you ever experienced that kind of love before? Maybe before you can have that, you have to have your own self built up strong and sure.

I often wonder would everybody be happier if I just disappeared, like our voices in the air?

Unconditional Love

Sometimes I feel so alone, like I'm the only one in the world, no one understands me. Nothing left to live for, I'm just an empty vessel, doomed to walk in the world.

I often wonder would everybody be happier if I just disappeared, like our voices in the air?

They say time only flies forward and never backwards but for me it seems like time itself has stopped and I'm stuck living in this hellhole day to day. I'm stressed ' about my case, not knowing what this system has planned for me. I'm having tragic thoughts running through my head. I'm alone in my room,with just me and my thoughts...

... and then I realize I do have a reason to live: My mom. She just brightens my day, an angel from above. Man, words can't even describe her. She's that one person that's always been there for me, even though I failed her as a son, I didn't pass in life, she always shows unconditional love. That's why I love my mom. So for her I'm gonna put down my rag and pick up the Bible... because that's the way to forget all my chaos .

-Nguyen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In the first part of this piece, you set us up for loneliness and despair, taking us to that lonely place where a person can give up all hope, and then in the second part you lift our spirits with this inspiring reminder of a love that can help you take yourself out of despair... it's like by writing the piece this way you made us, the readers, go through the journey you're on, even if it was just for a minute. We're glad you have your mom's support this way – but don't ever think you failed her as a son, or you "didn't pass in life." Your life is just beginning, and failure isn't about falling – failure is about giving up. You haven't given up yet, and from what you write, and how you write it, it doesn't look like you ever will!

My Life And Crack

Next Week I go to my Dispositional Hearing (sentencing) . Hopefully my disposition goes well, if not who knows a what the hell? I'm' hoping I don't have to stay in jail.

Crack cocaine is a big disappointment to my life as a young boy, because I seen the affects that it had on a couple family members.

And it had some weird things: people got they lighters looking on the ground swear they see something, but it ain't' shhh there. Man I seen a ninjas swear he seen Jesus, man, and that just ripped me out.

Then one time --I'm not gon' lie -- I seen where my big potna put the dope and I took it. If it wasn't for pops I would have got shot.

From that point on I know how powerful the drug was so, by that the past experience, I told myself I was never going to indulge in this drug. But when I was 13 I got kicked out of my house, and the only way I could survive was to sell crack, 'cause all my OG's was selling weed. There was no way I could make money 'cause they had all the clienteles, and when I seen how much money I was making... from that point I just let the drug suck me in until I overdosed from it.

-Lil' Dre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil Dre, you really went out this time and wrote a painfully honest piece about your life. That must have taken some real courage, but like you said, you "weren't gon' lie." It sounds like you've been to hell and back again, starting from a very young age. When you look back on that time you spent selling and using, which part were you more addicted to, the money or the drug itself? And now that being locked up has given you a break to look back on it, do you think that you've come out where you can see the light at the end of the tunnel? It sound like you had real reasons for thinking that crack was the only way out of the messed up situation you were in... but that was then, this is now. Do you think that when you get out, you'll still feel tempted by the old demons? Do you have the support of your family this time around? You deserve better than that kind of life, don't you think?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Life Is No Game

I sit down in my cell just thinkin' about all the people I cause pain to, and that I can't take back what I did. I wish that I could start over. Sometimes I wish life was a little game and we could just push the start over button and everything would start over, but the real world is not like that. All my loved ones' that I hurt by coming to the hall and the pain I caused them. I just wish that I had somebody who could feel the pain I been through and wish I had someone to talk to.

But I tell all you youngstas out there, just live life, don't rush life because life is a valuable thing. And don't do drugs because drugs lead to other things and it will get to a place where you don't want to be. Away from family and friend.

-BeBe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for this honest heartfelt piece about how much it hurts to be in the hall, facing your mistakes and cut off from the people who love you. You can always talk to The Beat, but we know that's not enough. But it's a lot! Everyone reading your piece this week will feel a little better because you used the words to describe the pain so many are scared to voice.

Relationship Ups And Downs

I found it is very hard to please my mom.
Even when I clean my room, she yells,
so there's not much more to tell.
I scream, cry, yell and tell.
Now look at me in a cell.
I sit and wonder what it would be like down under.
Now I am free seeing the wind blow through a tree.
I sit and wait for my ride.
When I look up I can only cry.
It is my mom. She cries and cries,
but when she stops.
She starts to say "You pleased me by showing me
the way back to reality."

-Angel, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Living up to other's expectations can be exhausting. What are the expectations you have for yourself? Have you ever sat down and shared these expectations with your mother? You may find great support in those closest to you, how willing are you to be with them? We encourage you to spend time daily sharing, talking with your mom. This will help you to understand each other better and to develop more realistic expectations for each other.

I hate being locked up like animal in a cage.

That's why I'm going to stop every thing that I'm doing wrong

Ghetto

Trying to survive in this game,
Trying to make it to the top in the ghetto,
Trying and trying to get out of this gang,
So I will not die in this game,
The gang is all I know, packing nine's on my side to maintain.
Banging in these streets will not get you anywhere
But six feet deep, so why bang?
I'm through with them games.
The ghetto is where I was raised
In these cold streets of Phoenix
Where people are killing people every day for no reason,
That's why it's called the ghetto and it ain't no game.
So why play the game when it ain't gonna get you anywhere.
Gangs are all over world nowadays.
So why should we ride for our clicks and die for the click?
Why don't we ride for our family and die for our family?
You might consider your homies your family
but they're not,
They're just fake that will bite you like a snake.
So why not be through with them games?

-Lil' Man, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: We're glad you've realized that gangbanging and violence will not end you up anywhere but dead. What will you do instead? How do you plan to get out of "the game?" Without a plan, it will be easy to get caught up in it again. When you have no plan, when you have no direction the streets have a way of swallowing you up. What plan are you working on? Our advice... stay in school and get an education. That is the best way to guarantee that you don't end up relying on the streets for survival!

Locked Up

I been locked up in Durango for about five months, setting my goals
But the judge don't want to let me go
I want to do right, but the judge put me under where I don't want to go.
Six feet walls and can't get my feet out
because I'm locked up.
I might go to Vision Quest
on my next court date
but I don't know what's going to happen.
So I'm just trying to maintain
not lose my mind and go crazy up in here
Because I been in there so long
my head is already twisted
Thinking of insane things to do to people
but I control it.
I would've got in a lot of fights up in here
But for some reason I control myself
But when I get out
I'm not going back to the hood
I'm moving on with my life and do something with it
I hate being locked up like animal in a cage.
That's why I'm going to stop
every thing that I'm doing wrong
And live my life the way I always dreamed without watching my back
Scared if someone's going to blast me
But I don't have to be scared any more
Because I'm living my life the way I want to.

-Lil' Man, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: It sounds like the consequences of your actions were a lot more than you were counting on! Unfortunately, a lot of teenagers fail to consider what the possible consequences of their choices may be. From what you've written, it sounds like you've learned your lesson, but once you leave detention, don't forget the lessons you've learned. Your written intentions are great, but only time will show how sincere you are by your actions you pursue. Vision Quest and other placements are excellent sources of guidance and inspiration to walk the path you say you've chosen. We hope you do go out there and do something positive with your life.

don't rush life because life is a valuable thing

Gettin To Me

This place is startin' to get to me
I can't seem to ever break myself free
I still don't know why
sometimes I feel like I wanna cry
but in the past I always seem to stride
but this time things seem different
it seems like the devil put a hex on me
and sometimes it feels like God is testing me
and for only sixteen I've seen a lot of things
I seen girls thrown on the ground
and I've beat down the guys who did it
and 'til now I never seem to quit it.

-Liv, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: You seem to be frustrated with yourself and the decisions you continue to make. Life is barely starting...and it's okay to admit life is hard and to feel so overwhelmed you cry...everybody cries- soldiers and gangsters...everybody. We want to encourage you and admonish you "Don't give up, you are not alone. Change is hard. Be patient and at the same time persistent. Be patient with yourself and others, and be persistent in pursuing the life of which you dream."

They (the police) gave me the walkin' pass!

Change

Changing your friends it's hard to do
But if you do not want to come back in here,
I'm not talking about blowing your friends off for good
Just go and visit them every once in a while
So they don't get you in trouble and go to jail
That's all I got to say.

-Lil' Man, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: This poem is straight to the point – if you want to change your life, you have to change your friends. That's the truth! If you don't want to keep getting in trouble, then you have to quit hanging out with people who get in trouble. True friends will be supportive of your goals and your desire to stay sober, stay out of jail and be successful.

Given A Break

Yeah, when I first ran from the group home, me and my girlfriend was ridin' around in my lil' Geo Sport, comin' from my spot, when Task in an unmarked tried to creep on us. But we wasn't on point and they swerved up on us and blurped us.

They took me out the driver's seat and started patting me down like I was wanted for murder or something. They asked my girl if she was holding anything for me. She told them no, so they told her to walk off. Then they took me out the handcuffs and made me walk with her. They gave me the walkin' pass!

And they told me if I was caught driving around anytime that night, they would take my car away and take me to the station to get finger-printed for any warrants or anything.

-Lil' C-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So why do you think they gave you a break like that? Just 'cause they were busy and didn't want to go to the trouble, or because they wanted you to go home and be safe. If the latter, how long did that wish for you last? Were you out and about again the next night, or did you and you girl stay where you both knew you'd be all right?

No Cops

If there were no cops that will increase crimes because everyone will go crazy and kill each other over gangbanging or for no reason. You think people steal cars now

If there were no cops or no consequences they will be cars stolen every day.

-Lil' Man, Maricopa County, Arizona

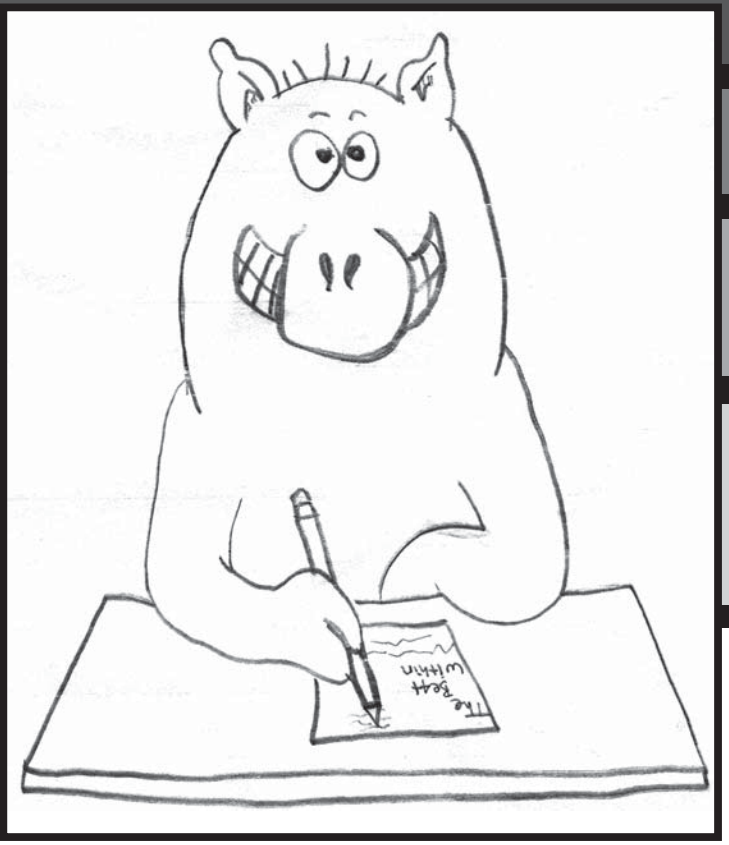
From The Beat: That's right! Someone has to enforce the rules of our society in order to keep us and our property safe! We have laws for a reason, but without consequences or people to enforce the consequences, the rules would be meaningless. It is also possible that if we all took on an attitude of treating others as we would want to be treated, even those we do not know or necessarily understand, the desire for revenge or taking advantage of others would subside.

Homie Coming Up

Homie coming up nowadays, rolling in Escalade
But when they fell they fell hard
They fell so hard that they don't even know it
They will be 6 feet under or in prison and don't even know it
That's how far they fell down in a big hole.
What do they do when they get out of jail?
They do the same shhh that they were doing.
I'm the same way, but now I got to change my ways
Or I will be right next to you in prison.
But if I hit the prison walls I'm going to cry.
That ain't no lie.

-Lil' Man, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Lil' Man... sounds like you know what you don't want in life. Are you confused about how to make the changes you need to make to put your life on a different track? Who are the people in your life who love you and want you to maintain your freedom? We know you have stepped up in the past, faced obstacles and have found the inner strength to overcome them. We believe you have the strength to overcome the obstacles you now face. Surround yourself with people who will support you in pursuing a life worth living. You will live the life you choose to live. What will you choose?



Nothing But Stress

Being here is nothing but stress. Most of the time, you think about what's going to happen when your court day comes. Sometimes you think of the loved ones you miss when you look out the window or chilling in your room. Some people don't care about what they going to be doing in the future. All the events you can be doing when you're at the outs.

Ever since I've been locked up in December, all those things had been going through my head. You know that you can't do nothing about it, but just do the time. It ain't worth it. Had many chance to change, but always end up on the same old road that I had been on for the past few years. I always think about my family, my girlfriend, my future, and how am I going to get out the system.

This is my second time coming in here and they already trying to send me to CYA. All the crime you committed, you will eventually end up saying, "It ain't worth it." It's true, crime is nothing but stress because eventually, bad things will come back right at your face, but harder or more serious consequences.

Right now, I just wish that the Judge gives me another chance to make a change in my life and stay real close with my family. Without your family to back you up, you really nothing but a true homeless because that's where you going to end up in. I'm for damn sure if I get this second chance, I will do whatever it takes to make my family and especially my parents proud of me. Stay strong and good luck to all. Peace

-Monkey U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire your determination to change, and we believe you are serious. But it's not enough to make promises, Monkey, you also need to make real plans. You have to examine yourself very closely, especially the time you were out between the first time you were here and this time. It's in that period of freedom, where you were able to make your own choices, that you messed up. So look carefully at those choices, and make a real plan to avoid falling into the same traps and giving in to the same temptations. You have a loving family and a loving girlfriend. You have a good mind and a good heart. You have good intentions and a desire for a good life. All those things are great strengths, and you can build on those strengths to succeed. But wishing for it is not going to make it happen.

I Wonder

I wonder why I was born
I wonder why I took da chance to walk out da door
I wonder what my family is doin' right now
And I wonder if they will want me back
I wonder why I'm doin' this list
I wonder if it is just because I was upset
I wonder when I'm gonna get out of here
I want to try to face or fight my fears
I wonder if my baby daddy still does what he does to fall in tears
I wonder if I would ever go back to my old way
I wonder why I gotta be here
I wonder why I was born

-Lil' Ori, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The only one of these questions we can answer is this one: You have to be here because you're still wondering if you'll go back to your old ways. You've got to be here to truly get it deep in your soul that your old ways lead to the grave. You've got to be here because you are worth something, because you are special, because you have things to contribute to the world — and because you have a brain that allows you to wonder! One more thing we can say is don't stop wondering because wondering is thinking and thinking is the beginning of knowledge...

Crack And My Community

Crack in the community is very serious in the 'hood because it kills. Yes it does seem normal to me because I be around it a lot. I was not born when crack invaded my community. It has affected my family because on my dad side they drink a lot.

It has also affected my community because the neighborhood gets messier and dirtier every day. It has not affected my education because I'm a good student when it comes to school.

It has affected my friends a lot because a few years ago me and my friends used to play basketball. Now, since drugs affected their life, they don't even play. They just sit around and smoke. I think the drug game should not stop because if it did people would be dead.

-Reese The Beast U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've given some excellent examples of why drugs devastate individuals, families and communities. There's only one things we don't understand, and that's your conclusion. What do you mean when you say people would die if the drug game stopped? People are dying right now because of the drug game, so what do you mean? We can tell that you're a good student. Keep seeking your education, and keep away from those drugs (and the alcohol that affects your family), and you are building a great future for yourself!

Getting Played

My PO and the probation department are trying to send me to a group home. I feel like they're trying to play me. The heavy in my case got to go home and I'm still here. If they let me go home, I'm going to help my community and be with my family. I think God wanted me to be in here to learn my lesson, and show how much my family loves me.

My mom is fighting for me to the go to the Ranch, and even if they send me to a group home, my mom is going to fight. I've been here since December 11th, and today is January 23rd. I'm still here. I'm learning that being locked up ain't cool, and the way the system is set up is, it's designed for you to go in and out.

I want to cut through it and stay out and go to college and major in history. I got a plan to do what I want to do in my life, but the system, they won't give me a chance.

-Dexter U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Is this the first time you've been locked up, Dexter? If not, then the system has already given you a chance (or more than one), and you threw it back in their face. So even if things are different now (and you have such passion in your writing that we believe things are different), why should the system take another chance with you? If you were in their place trying to make the right judgment about what should happen to you, what do you really think you would be weighing, and how would you make your judgment. One thing we know for sure, whether you go to the ranch, a group home, or to your mom's loving arms, you are already on the right track and moving forward. That is all positive, so don't let your anger about what the system is about to do sabotage those wonderful plans you have for your life. You can succeed in the long run, whatever happens to you in the short run.

Given A Break

Well, I never did have a cop to give me a warning. I wished they did so I wont be doing time right now. And guess what? This is my first time committing a crime and getting arrested. But oh well, I guess...

I've already been in here for like two months. So I'm not trippin' that much. I'm just saying. But yeah. I bet a lot of people gets a chance out there, but they just take if for granted and continue doing what they did.

But anyways, the police is also making a mistake when they let people slide. The reason why they made a mistake because maybe they didn't mention what the crime can do to them and how they will lose their freedom. Anyways, my hands are getting tired so I will talk more to The Beat next time.

-Lonely U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We believe you when you say this is the first time you've been arrested (and that's a good record to have), but is it really the first time you've committed a crime? Are you telling us that you didn't know it was a crime before you did it, and if the police had warned you, then you would have known? Are you really being honest, Mr. L? On the other hand, we think you're exactly right when you say it's not enough for the police to just let someone slide unless they also provide a reality check that contains more information than just: "If you do it again, I'll take you in."

Why O' Why

Another chance to go home
But now I'm here feelin' all alone
Looking out my window
Trying not to stress out
Wonderin' why I keep comin' back
Only if I would not done wrong
Once again I say to myself:
"Never do wrong, time to do good, "
Yet, everyone always say the same.

-Hogg U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Wondering about things is a form of thinking, and thinking is the beginning of knowledge. Telling yourself not to do wrong is a good thing, even if you have told yourself the same thing before. Not everyone says the same; some are proud of the wrong they do. Do you want to change the "wrong" you do, or just change the consequences? The two are bound together like life and death. You

Lies

Lies are the only thing you heard from me!
Lies are the only thing that you believe!
Lies are why I'm sitting in rehab!
Lies are why I'm still going to be in your life
Well, now I'm sick and tired of lies
Lies, lies, lies, lies
No more lies!

-Marie, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: All we can say, Marie, is that we hope this is not just another lie... We don't think it is, but when everything that went before is a lie, you will have to create a new track record to regain trust.

Wanting Another Chance To Do Right

I had been given a break from the cops and I took it for granted because look where I'm at now, in the halls. No, it's hard and not so hard for ninjas thinkin' they hard in life and in jail too, but life is a good thing. You suppose to listen. But now Neil know what listen mean.

Now you supposed to do right and listen to mom and pops. They yo' one in life when you lock up and not lock up. But what I'm sayin' is do right when you on the outs if you get one more chance to see the light again.

It's not hard for no one to do what yo' PO say. I know I messed up, but I'ma try my best to do right if they give me one more chance and that's on everything. But Weebles out. I be back on the nexts.

-Weebles U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Pay close attention to your message in this piece. The last time you got a break, you took it for granted. But you've learned something from that experience, and that's all any of us can do — learn from our mistakes. Don't stop learning, and don't forget the lessons you've already learned.

Wish I Could Be Home

I wish I could be home! Jail ain't the place to be for a young G coming from the 'hood. We from the 'hood should be trying to make things better for our siblings, family and children. We need to change things for our youngstas so they can have things and live better than we did when we were little.

I can't wait to get released. I have my life planned out for me when I get out so I don't have to do what I used to do when I was out before — and I ain't gonna be getting caught up no more! Got a plan!

-Young Lazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, you really seem to understand! Now stick to that plan, and even if you can't save every youngsta coming up, you can show the ones looking up to you what to do and not to do — also that you can still be you and change what you do. It's never to late to change if you're willing to use your brain and maintain. Props! Peace.

The Price Was His Life

All it took was one man
He didn't even need a mic
Thought he would get
His point across
And shall I say
He's right
'Cause for your pain
To go away
You must simply
Pay a price
But I'm sure
No one considered
That the price
Would be their life
Or, for some of their kids
Home, husband or wife
All because they're introduced to shhh
That just ain't right
Slavery didn't kill off the race
But black men still are slow in pace

-Chanda U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: No, slavery didn't kill off the race, but it set the race back far enough that many are still trying to catch up. This is a fine piece of poetry and of wisdom. So, what is someone as smart as you allowing herself to be locked up for? Why aren't you in school getting the education that's going to change your life?

If There Be Pain...

To Tonisha, My Wifey
If there be pain,
all you need to do
is call on me to be with you
And before you hang up the phone
you will no longer be alone
Together we can never fall
because our love will conquer all
If there be pain,
reach out for a helping hand
and I shall hold you wherever I am
Every breath I breathe will be into you
For without you here my joy is through
My life was lived through falling rain
so call me if there be pain!

-Lil' AJ U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Even if love can't really conquer all (war, disease, death), it certainly makes life much easier to live. This is a beautiful love poem, and we hope the object of your love appreciates it. And we hope you appreciate her enough to find a way not to give the system the power to take you from her again, once you touch down.

Crackhead Anthem

i'm hella black
i know
i smoke crack
i know my lips look like
i kissed a chalkboard
they slightly cracked
i'm hella dusty in the hall
and i smell like it
they put me way in the back
'cause i stank
from smoking crack

-Crackhead, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Crack ain't black, and drug addiction takes down the mighty and the meek. Drug sales are as addictive as drug use, and all that fast money can't stop a speeding bullet or buy your way out of hell when you catch 25 with an L. So stop clowning on the crackhead and take a look at what you're doing with your own life instead.

Crack And My Community

Dope in the 'hood? I cant really say too much about that 'cause dope been in the 'hood since the '80s, baby. And yeah, I'ma 80's baby. But dope is a part of getting' money, but at the same time it take lives too, and I know it's getting' sick 'cause it used ta be just OG knocks and aunties, but now it's girl as young as 17 and 18 buyin' d.

I used ta be mad at dope 'cause it had got my mom, and I was seein' what it had did to her. I would think about it like when times she wouldn't come home and I would be on the block pullin' all nights, and the same dope fiends would be at the top of the block and at the bottom, and I be like, "Damn! Do they ever go home?" I know they got kids. That's messed up, but that's how I was gettin me dip, and yeah, when my mom got better I stopped, I started eatin' another way.

-Dm U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Your description of pulling all-nighters while watching mothers on the block with kids waiting for them at home is eye-opening, and very sad. But what interests us the most about this piece is the fact that you were able to stop selling the poison that was putting money in your pocket and start "eatin' another way." What was the other way? Did it involve illegal actions, too, or did you find a way to eat without risking your freedom? It looks like you have to keep searching for a way to do that, since something you did has led you here. You may be moving in the right direction, but you've got to go even farther if you want to stay out of the system's claws.

Spinning

My mind is spinning
because I am a young parent.
My pride is for my family.
It is time to start a new story,
with love and heat,
with good times and bad times.
There will be a little bit of confusion
and a little joking in the story.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a fine poem. And it sounds like a fine story. Every day is a new chapter in the story of our lives.

Almost Out For Good!

Well, well, well ... what should I talk about this week? I'm almost out! I have eight days left to go and have to tell you that I'm excited to get out! It's like this: When I get out I have a plan. My plan is to get my GED, get a job, and work with The Beat ... and move out of my family's house and do my own thing.

Well, since I'm about to leave these pages too, all I can say is that I hope that when you read my pieces, you agreed with me about the need to and the reasons to change on the outs. Be a part of the revolution that will shut down the system 'cause we stay free.

Remember: Turn their plan around on them. They're setting us up for failure in the world. But it's our time — make something of it! Be somebody! Don't be what they want you to be: a return offender.

Well, until next time ... nah, I don't plan to be back. But keep it real and remember to be yourself and not nobody else. Also live your life, not nobody else's. Last but not least: God is love. Take care.

-Fairlas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you put those dots after the letters spelling out God, it made us wonder if you were using it as a code, like: Gangstas On Drugs, or something. We hope not. In the recovery movement they talk about sticking to your plan, and when they spell out God, they say it means Good Orderly Direction. Honestly, you know drugs and alcohol will affect your decision-making, or your follow-through on the decisions you've made at Camp — so slow your roll (role) and you'll see your future swoll'! Hope to see you at The Beat offices!

Who Do I Think Deserves A Holiday

I think my father Allan Chi deserves a holiday because he is the only person in this world that stayed with me through thick and thin. My father looked out for me so many times and I just didn't care.

Now I'm sitting in the new cell thinking that I messed everything up with my dad. But guess what? My dad still comes every day because he told me that I'm better than this.

-Superman U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: From your brief description, we think your dad deserves a holiday too! You are so lucky to have a father like this who loves you and supports you, and won't let you fall. But he is also lucky to have a son who recognizes what a treasure he has in his father. We know one thing, though: Your father doesn't want a holiday, he wants you home with him, living the right kind of life and building a decent future. You owe him and yourself nothing less.

Freedom

What's good Beat? This is Lil' Huero, writing once again from Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall. Well, I have no interest in the topics this week, so I'm going to write about something else.

I would like to write about freedom, because, if I'm lucky, they might release me on bail real soon! I'm trippin' hard 'cause I have court on Monday and we're going to be talking about whether I should get released on EMP or GPS. The GPS is something new. Basically, they'll put an ankle bracelet on me and whenever they need to find me, they'll look at a map on a computer and see me as a little dot at any time of the day or night. Or, they might just keep me here.

Well Beat, that's all for now, but I hope this is my last time writing for The Beat. Alrato.

-Jesse, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish you very good luck. We enjoy your pieces. That GPS stuff sounds like Global Positioning System. That's what mountain climbers and explorers use, in case they get lost, and need to be rescued. The GPS let's rescue teams pinpoint their location, anywhere on the planet. We're not sure if it works on Mars, though. Good luck Jesse.

Taking Advantage Of My Break

I was given a break by the judge this time around 'cause she is going to let me go on the 31st on three-year probation. I am going to take this chance and go to school and get a job and do what I got to do.

-Tay U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What you "got to do" is exactly what you plan to do — go to school and get a job (but mainly, go to school). We hope you keep this promise, Tay, because it's a lot easier to make promises like this when you're locked up and wanting to be free, than when you're free and wanting to do things that lead back here. Don't forget.

Crack Hit Hard

Crack hit my spot hard. I was in the fifth grade pushin' crack, goin' to the Boys' and Girls' Club. I was the youngest ninja standin' on the spot — and police never messed with me.

I was out pushin' it hard at a young age, tryin' to get paid, barely graduated from eighth grade. This is serious business!

-Keith, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so pernicious. As a lil' youngster you learn the trade, and your youth protects you from getting "made" by the police. And even if they do pick you up, you're so young, you get a quick release. So by the time you're fifteen, sixteen or seventeen and beginning to look like a man not a child, selling crack is the only thing you know to maintain your life style — school went by the wayside, and your future now increasingly lengthy stays inside the system. Yeah, it's a serious business. Thanks for your witness to the fact that the brightest and the best from your hood still get destroyed by crack — even if they never smoke/choke it back.

My Life After Juvenile

after juvenile i see myself
becoming a better man
the reason i say this is because
i can't see my life being in juvenile
it's hard everyday
having to get up when they tell you to
using the bathroom when they tell you to
and for me
being a young black male
it makes me think of slavery days
how they used to have to listen
when somebody tells them to
and to me
i thought slavery days was over
but hey
maybe it's not
but for all you younger kids that's reading
i really hope y'all
don't make the mistake i did
because if i could take it back
i would
and make the right decision
and for you kids
who haven't been in juvenile
you still have a chance
to make that right decision

-Jalasko, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Historically, when slavery days ended in the Dixie, they ran a game on the ex-slaves. They set up whore houses, then arrested everyone in 'em and sent them to prisons that were just plantations by a new name. Many call what's going on now, neo-slavery ("neo" means "new"). But here's the kicker, first you become a slave to the game or the gang or your addiction or whatever, and then you become a slave to the system. You can't free yourself from one without freeing yourself from the other. Maybe when you were younger, you had no choice. Plus if they arrested you at all, they let you go with a slap on the wrist — but now they clap cuffs on your wrists and shackles on your ankles. You are old enough now to figure out a legitimate (legal) angle, whether it's a hustle or a nine-to-five job — to free yourself from the system, you have to free yourself from the mob.

Just The Other Day

I was given a chance just the other day here at Camp. Staff was letting me go to a job-training class in West Oakland, and one day I didn't go but instead did my own thing for the day.

Camp found out and took away that privilege from me. Then today they gave me the privilege to start going to college — and I hope to take the opportunity and make the best of it.

-Josh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The most important lesson perhaps to learn at Camp, is not to abuse your privileges — and once you're in the system freedom is a privilege not a right! The system is only doing you a favor by giving you a second chance at attending an outside activity for your own benefit, if you learn that lesson. If you squander it, all you've done is proven to the system but more importantly to yourself — that you cannot handle freedom responsibly. However, learn that lesson and live it after your release, and you'll know what it is to stay free!

Time Up, Stand Up

What's up, Beat! My time is basically up at Camp! So I'm go' stand up at Camp — feel me? I did the judge's program the best way I could.

Man, I been in jail for eight months. This the longest time I ever did — so I know how y'all feel wit' them years. That's a negative I'm not gon' go out. Instead I'm gonna go get this job, do my thang on the side, and react on haters all day!

Whoever in the Hall reading my piece and y'all going to a placement: Do that thang! I ain't gon' say pimp it 'cause you ain't getting nothing out of it — so just do it! And to all in the Hall, I love y'all. And beezy, I'm out this place — all day, positive!

-D Factor, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like the direction you're heading in, but now when you plan to take half-steps (like one foot in the game and one foot out), you can expect the foot your dragging to get the whole of you caught up sooner or later. So put aside doing that stuff on the side, 'cause the only side you want to worry about is staying on the outside of this system. Oh, one more thing, it's your program that counts — what you got out of it — not the judge's. You say you did the judge's program and now you're going free. If you did your program (and learned your lesson), you'll not only get out but stay out of the system!

Unfold

let this mystery unfold
wherever it may be
that's hiding deep inside of me
let it show and let it grow
let it be free
instead of compressing to the infinite power
let it multiply
unbend and extend
instead of being divided
let it be reunited
let it be raised before it decays
let it stand tall
while i'm behind the stone wall
let it prevail without fail
trapped locked and unknown
search behind every organ and every bone
hear the baritone through the trombone
take me out this unknown twilight zone
amplify the microphone
let me reach the throne plated with my birthstone

-Jrr, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your rhymes rise from off the earth and traverse the sky, spreading angelic wings or hawk-like into the wind you rise seemingly without effort. And yet we know it's different, for you're shackled to the tiny perimeter of a daily institutional routine that forces the mystery in your heart to remains unseen even by you. We submit that your freedom will consist in your breaking from your past and making peace with the world around you at last, whether you speak in rhythm and rhyme with a microphone amplifying your mind or silently leave ink tracks down these pages stirring the imaginations of thousands locked in human cages — your throne stands awaiting your growing into a responsible and productive young man.

Crack Kills

I think if crack was to disappear from my community, it would be different for the hustlas. They wouldn't know what to do. It's gon' to be a whole lot of robbing and killing going on!

But I also do think if maybe some of the drug selling could be slowed down, it wouldn't be so many young people locked up. That's the problem going on in the world. Maybe—then maybe that would inspire us to wanna do right, to not wanna go out and waste our lives selling drugs.

I plan on trying to look at the world in a more positive manner! Then maybe I will make it somewhere successful in life. Also if we notice that all we're doing is killing our own people and corruptin' our neighborhoods more — but it's up to us to make the change. I'm gone.

-Lil' Jr., 150 Crew

From The Beat: Alas, right now it looks like if crack disappeared off the streets of Oakland, crystal meth' would invade like Desert Storm. The only real solution is exactly what you suggest: "if we young people had something to wake up to in the morning that's positive to look at". Major props on taking that responsibility entirely on yourself and on your generation growing up in the 'hood, 'cause that's the determination it will take. On the other hand, there needs to be a partnership with a community that understands and cares (and how can they care if they don't understand). Well, that's why we love it when we get pieces as intelligent, articulate, honest and insightful as yours. We wish (1) there were more and (2) that message in The Beat would be read by everyone in the world — that's why it's on the internet anyway. Thanks again. Keep your head up and never give up on you!

Guns and Weed

I got arrested by smoking weed in my brother's car and got caught with a loaded pistol in the glove box. That is why I'm here.

I regret having a gun. When I get out, I'm gonna stop smoking weed and finish high school — and find a job so I can take care of my mom. I promise I will never get arrested ever again. I am a changed young man. I will always keep my head up.

-Tito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't say enough in praise of your wise decision. Carrying a gun is like carrying a bullet magnet, 'cause if you have a gun, they're gonna shoot first and ask questions later. It may save you from a beating, but it will not save your life — it's the opposite of protection from death by bullets. And with enhanced sentences, carrying a gun is just dumb. But you go way further and see the connection between smoking weed and blowing off school. What can we say, you're way past cool — but now you need to follow through after your release when this reality begins to feel like a bad dream. It's real, so remember how you feel, and you'll both get free and stay free. Plus saying so in The Beat may help another get off the street! Much love, respect and gratitude for publishing your attitude.

Going to College

I'm seventeen years old, and going to college is a big part of my life right now. — Why? — Because I'm going to become a firefighter, and fulfilling the educational requirements is a necessity. My intelligence is going to help me.

Intelligence is more than potential, it's all of the above, making up your mind to put it to good use and not using it as a tool for abuse. I just wish more of my people shared my point of view and wanted to use their intelligence in positive ways to accomplish the goal of getting paid while help (instead of hurting) others along the way.

Everybody in this room where I sit in juvenile hall, is intelligent in his own way! Just be cautious in what you do, how you do and when you do — go to school. Be more than what you are now, boys — and girls!

-Jermaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. You can take a thug to school everyday, but you can't make him start to think in a new way. Yet your piece is like sowing seed. Like it says in the Bible, some seeds fall on rock and never grow; others fall on shallow soil and begin to sprout but wither in the sun; yet others fall on good, rich soil (a willing heart and a determined mind) to take root, sprout, grow strong and live long. Teach by example. Be cunning as a serpent and innocent as a dove, as Jesus instructed — which means, avoid temptation and don't play the fool. Finish school, get that job and your future will be cool!

To Whom This May Concern

i'm not feeling how you're all in my face
but really want to take my place
how you want to be my friend
but really want my man
it's a shame how i wear the crown
and every time i look you way you have a frown
you need to step your game up and stop hating on me
and put more effort into who you want to be
why you got to put me down to make you smile
you need to stop hating on me and think about why
is it that you want to be like me
is it because i hand around ms. p
or i'm cool with the new supervisor d-b
or when i have visits you see me smiling with my family
please let me be and stop hating on me
'cause if you just ask, i'll teach you how to be like me

-Aleshia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have this genre of rhyme down pat, and whenever you choose you can take what's given and give it doubled back. Still as a third party witness to the show, we feel it'd be better if you turn your focus away from those who annoy, irritate or offend, and keep your mind focused on your own strengths as well as flaws you need to mend. Haters still distract you too much with their dissension, when you don't even need to give them that much of your attention.

I promise I will never get arrested ever again. I am a changed young man.

Heroin In the Community

Man, in my hood they sell crack and heroin! But what they sell most is heroin, and it cost a lot of money. But if you know how to sell, you can afford to buy it.

Man! Ya just don't know, man. Everybody I know sells heroin! I think people be mad if you be getting money, man. If there was no crack or heroin, then people would not be getting money like they do. But people will kill for it, too, man. I know. I seen a lot.

But if the police know you, it's hard to stay away from them. Every time they see you, they will call your name like, "Don't run! I will shoot you." But they just say that for you will not run.

But me, man, I sell heroin. Forget crack! That don't get money like me! And what I say is — stay legit or get money! That's what I'm going to do when I get out — get money! And you know we stay solid.

-Lil' Sammy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Stay solid with yourself, not with the crew that couldn't help you when you got caught up. Also "stay legit or get money" are not the options, rather stay legit and get money, so you can stay out to spend it, or get money through drug sales and find yourself slipping into the back of a police car for something or other, or catching a bullet from someone you once called your brother (because he thought you stood between him and the money he saw you put in your pocket).

I Could Have Been Arrested

I was once given a chance by the police when I could have been arrested and been gone for a long time.

The officer had listened to both stories and realized that for once I wasn't the one in the wrong when some guy was tryin' to harass a little kid (who was my little brother!), and the officer let me go. I am thankful for that cop being there at that time.

-Young Lazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're grateful to the officer for taking the time to get the real story and make a just decision on the spot, and we're grateful to you for sharing that story with our readers. But now when you write "for once" you were not in the wrong — take that to heart, too. You know you can do better than act a foo' when a flash of temper comes at you, or whatever it is blows your coo'.

Poem

The poem was nothing like the flow of a river.
It was the plot, and the tension in his voice
that made it seem like a mirage.
It was his words that broke like a secret.

-Skar, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Wow. Wonderful piece. What inspired this?

Crack In My Community

it's like this
if your money is right
then the coke stay white
i could always spot a dope fien'
on the cooter hittin' the pipe
while my little brother
at the store buying mike and knights
man this shhh ain't right
but i was the one
with the lowest price
bleeding the block all night
you can always catch me on the nut
with my pockets tight
believe me i wasn't riding no bike
dope fiend's was giving up their cars
and stealing from their wife
just for one night
sucking that glass pipe
had them on a hype
looking up into that light
while the popo's trying to find their pipe
now crack cocaine in your life
just ain't right

-Aleshia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We understand that terrible and tragic addiction of a crackhead to sucking on a glass pipe is no fiction, but too few see clearly enough to agree with us that selling that cream in the street is a serious addiction, too, and will have you up all hours of the night trying to keep your money right until the day comes when you really get down with someone who wants your spot, your cash flow, your hustle, all our dough, and somebody's going to get hurt — in fact, everybody's going to come out worse if they come out at all (and yes we mean doing serious time or a six foot fall). Still your conclusion says it true, 'cause crack cocaine in your life (on either side of the pipe) just ain't cool and will do you like a fool.

Rain

The rain came down like splinters.
It hit my hand. Now, as I walk
against the wind, I do not worry
about the silence night brings...
until I hear the music of the beast,
that is. But I'm glad to say –
this is just a tale, and it's a pleasure
to share it with you.

-Nick, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is exceptional. Very fine work.

Cocaine Blues

Crack cocaine started in the '80's, coming from the Colombians. That's when our Black community was destroyed.

Now, we have "knocks" everywhere on the corner, asking people for money, so they can get a hit so they can get high, and that's sad because it destroyed our black peoples' lives. Now, they don't have no family, no education, and no home. That's sad how they sleep under the freeway when it rains at night and got nowhere to go because all the homeless shelters are full.

I think if the Colombians didn't bring crack cocaine into our communities, our Black people would be more educated and have families to take care of, and spend some quality time with his kids like a real man suppose to, and would have a nice paying job.

So, peace out, Beat. This is yo' boy, Lil' Sam. God bless.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We agree with you that crack has, and continues to destroy communities, but this drug does not discriminate. It has destroyed not just Black families' homes, but families' homes of all races. What makes you so sure that information that crack cocaine came from Colombians? Regardless of where crack cocaine originated from, we wish that it had never been introduced to any community. Sam, continue to do your part in raising awareness and leading a clean productive life.

Faith

i wonder do you have faith
'cause i do
do you have faith to escape
the world and yo' mistakes
faith
capital F-A-I-T-H
what does that spell
faith
it means
F is for freedom
the freedom you need
to have and to keep
to do what you please
A is for amanda
the beauty of life
the light of your life
the joy of you
I is for the institutions
they put us young kids in
to keep us away from the bad
drugs and lies and crappy lives
T is for thanking god
for every breath we take
and thanking parents for us
H is for hell
the place you go when you keep
going to jail
hell and satan will bring you down
don't come back to dis hell-hole man
god got you

-Turquoise Yellow Thang, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's easy to say "don't come back" — but you've got to keep yourself away from the drugs and lies and crap, 'cause it's not a question of game smart. You've got to make a new start.

This Jungle

I stay with a military mindset. Guns ready to hit. Survival of the fittest, my ninja, but this is just the way that we live. The world is a jungle and I'm surviving in concrete. I learned to eat on the block. That's where you can find me. I learned to masquerade as an angel while I was amongst demons, lured to the streets for many reasons, constantly hungry, so I keep continuously eating, so I'll never stop living 'cause I'm addicted to breathing. Militarily-minded, we on the struggle to get papa. We gots to desicipline ourselves or the system will rape ya'. Militarily-minded don't be blinded by all the things I got. I'm all about ma' papa. Papa chasing is a must when I discipline myself. Boy, I can't be touched the DEA, the Feds. Boy, they can't stop me put in so much work. Yeah, they trying to drop me, but they can't 'cause I'm trying to live until I am old, but I'm married to the game.

This life I live, it ain't no joke. Walk on yo' block knowing that cats from the other side, they always at ya' throat 'cause they hear you running yo' mouth about what you did and all you doing is what they do, repping yo' block and being about yours, but that gangsta life ain't no joke, so the next time you do what you do, remember those other foes it out to get you, so get out while you still can, but fo' me, I'm stuck in it. This life is my life now.

-Maine Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't deny how you feel or how you see your life going. We can only hope that with maturity and age you will see that this way of thinking is a big waste of time, that is if it doesn't get the best of you, meaning you don't find yourself alone in a prison cell, or dead. This married to the game is the biggest crock of shhh! These marriages don't last! Wake up Maine! You are getting a break don't throw it away!

A Youngster And Crack

Crack seems normal to me because I've been around it at a young age. When I was young, my older brothers and patnas would tell me, "This shhh is like candy for grown-ups." Then, I got a lil' bit older and started to sell it. I've done seen families that were doing good, then turn around and go off track because of crack. It's had an effect on my family, but I look at it like, people know what happens when you get hooked on it, so it's their fault if they start messing with it.

-Ray Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes this makes a whole lot of sense, having been around drugs since you were a child. Illegal drugs is all you know and having been a witness to it's destruction. You show no pity either to those who have fallen prey. Why do you suppose the fiends/addicts allowed themselves to become a slave to drugs like crack?

Crack And My Community

Crack affected my community in bad ways and also good ways. It's been affected in bad ways because nowadays dope fiends be on that shhh not knowing what they doing. They will also do anything to get their hands on some crack.

But then again crack has also helped a lot of people see a lot of money. See crackheads do crack because they choose to and I don't think that the people selling it should be getting in trouble. They are just supplying it. But I think if crack wasn't around a lot more people would be broke than what it is now.

-Lil' Mikey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for offering such a smart, detailed analysis of the situation! You have a mind that can see multiple sides of things. It's sad, isn't it, that something that saves some people from poverty drives other people deeper into it?

Crack And My Community

In my community (the Tenderloin) there are many poor people that are doing crack. Always spend their money on crack and start to tweaking off of it. Also many of them are homeless but get money from the government and they spend it on drug, not even for food.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's a shame that the government cannot not do anything to bring communities like yours improvements in the standard of living by providing job training, education, health services and housing — instead of just money into the hands of people so sick on their addictions, they would rather smoke their drugs than eat! We're not sure who is sicker, the government or them!

Family First

Family first is what I say
Each and every single day
My life is wrong,
But it'll soon be right
And I'll go to sleep peacefully every night,
But don't get me wrong
I'm not going soft,
So if I got to,
I will let them thangs go off,
But I'm trying to change my ways
'Cause I got a son,
But I can't change the past
What's done is done,
So I'm gonna live for the future
And forget about the past
And try to change my life at last.

-Lil' Tb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good for you, the future is what you should be focusing on. You're right, your son is number one. Your son needs his dad home, not on the block, not in prison. You know that, now act on it! What's your plan?

I had a dog.
He was my one and only homie.
I always had to feed him, he was always hungry.
He was a dog that everyone would like.
He would never bite.
He was a homie to me.

My Dawg...My Homie

I had a dog.
He was my one and only homie.
I always had to feed him, he was always hungry.
He was a dog that everyone would like.
He would never bite.
He was a homie to me.
Always being friendly.
I thought pits were mean.
They're the meanest dogs in the country.
But not my dog. He was nice.
I've only had to hit him twice.
I taught him the second time, not to drink out the toilet. That's not nice or chasing after the mice.
I loved that dog. He was tight.
'Til one day he got into a fight.
That ended his life one night.

-Justen, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Having pets to love can enrich our lives and make us more compassionate. You obviously valued your pet. Your story is a good reminder for us to not judge a book by its cover. Companionship, trust, and love are all things we seek. I'm happy you had the opportunity to experience them, some never do. We are sorry for your loss and hope you will continue to allow yourself to love and be loved by animals and humans.

My Case

First of all, I'm here for something I didn't do. They're charging me with some serious offences. But it's all bull, because I didn't do anything. I'm not trippin' though. All I'm doing is waiting for court to prove to everybody that they're wrong. I'll just keep my head up. I'm not doing time for anybody. But it seems I'm guilty 'til proven innocent.

-Abraham, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You'll have your day, or days, in court to prove yourself. We're curious about your line: I'm not doing time for anyone. We suggest that you keep your thoughts to yourself and share them only with your attorney.

My Love

I'm trippin, 'cause I never really felt like this, but for you I cherish every kiss
I know it's a risk to make you my queen
Let you live in my crib and give you plenty green
To fulfill all your childhood dreams.
I know you already heard this before but the way you make me feel is real.
Girl you're always there to make me heal.

-Bobby, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Relationships we cherish can be healing for both people involved. You have a desire to fulfill her dreams, but what are your childhood dreams? To love and care for one another is one of life's greatest pleasures and the first person we must love and care for is ourselves in order to be able to do that for another. Is it only money that you need or are there other personal assets that would help you to fulfill those dreams?

Missing Bear

I had a dog named Bear. I had that dog for three years. When he was a puppy I played with him. Every day I got home from school I would play ball with him. When he got older I would run with him. Sometimes he would let me go in front of him so he could bite me on the leg and make me fall.

One day my two little brothers and Bear's son were beating me up. When Bear saw that, he came and bit my two little brothers and bit his son and threw him into the grass. I was happy when he did that.

Two months later we moved and I never saw him ever again and I got so sad.

-Mario, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Mario, it takes courage to open up about your feelings for your pet and the loss of that relationship. You are obviously a courageous young man. It sound like Bear was your protector as well as your companion. What are you doing to cope with your loss? To have a relationship that close is truly unique. You are fortunate.

Poem

I look into my pocket.
There's a message –
details and an address.
But little did I know –
the poison started to show,
like a fire in the window.
The lies and the trust
have shattered into dust.
The fire is burning my body
and I doubt I'll die slowly.

-Robin, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That must have been a terrible message. What inspired this good writing? Tell us more about you! Help readers learn why they need to stay out of places like this!

I'm just a nice, average 16 year old who likes to ride bikes and pretty much do anything that is extreme, or gives me a lot of adrenalin.

The Heart I Had

Can't leave...can't think, but I still find ways to write these things.
This place feels like it's finally tearing me apart,
but still I remember my heart.
The heart I had that never let me down.
The heart I had when I found out...
found out what happened to my girl
but I still kept her in my world.
The heart I had that gave my strength
no matter what the length
but this heart I had was too quiet
and now I have a new heart to make a riot

-Liv, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: To face difficulty, pain and disappointments in life and not allow one's heart to be hardened takes a conscious choice...a conscious choice to protect one's heart. It sounds like you are getting in touch with what is important to you...that you are finding your voice. Who do you want to be? How do you want to live your life? What will you riot against? What are the destructive chains you need to break off your life? In the long run your heart will be stronger and more open to love and be loved, if you begin to choose what is right for you.

You Love Me

Mom, I'm sorry I do most things wrong.
Even though it's been so long
my feelings for you are very strong
and remember you're the only one
Mom I'm sorry I ended up here,
even though my house is no where near.
I know that you come all the way over here just to visit me.
But mom this might sound kinda strange,
but when I get out I promise I am gonna change.
The only reason I'm on this earth
is because you loved me enough to give birth.

-Victor, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Moms do so much for us. They are powered by a love that is sometimes difficult for us to understand. At times we tend to take our mother's love for granted. What can you do with your life to show you value your mother's love?

What I Hate About Judgements

The thing I hate about people judging me when they barely know me is that everyone seems to think that I am some stupid kid, or they think that I'm that kid who smokes chronic, or I'm the one who has the beard. That's not who I am at all.

Me, I'm just a nice, average 16 year old who likes to ride bikes and pretty much do anything that is extreme, or gives me a lot of adrenalin. It's like my natural high, or something. The fact is – I'm just a person who likes to have fun, chill with my friends, and be around my family.

-Nick, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: It's very easy to fall into making judgments about people based on how they look, or with whom they hang out. We're all guilty of it. Finally, it's what you actually do that counts. You're in here for a reason. And that's what you need to concern yourself about. If you were a saint, people would still be making judgments about you. "Oh, there's that kid who thinks he's so great just because he saved ten people from a burning building." Learn not to be too bothered by what others think. As Mr. Shakespeare said – "to thine own self be true...."

Something About Me

One thing you don't know is that I feel like crumbling up this piece of paper. Something that no one knows about me is something that I don't know.
So stop asking me to write something I don't know.
I do not know anything about me, so nobody does.
I am a mysterious kid.
Do not ask, or tell me, to write.

-Shane, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Well, you know that you're a mysterious kid. Why is that? What's so mysterious about you? Do you eat with your eyes, or talk with your toes? What makes you so mysterious?

Poem Of Pain

The pain in my heart
is like a storm in winter
that shatters the glass.
The memory of the promise
you made me...
the questions you asked before
you kissed me,
and the pleasure you gave me
is like glass stabbing through me.
The pain you've caused
is like a Wednesday storm.
Lucky the magic took me.

-Robin, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We love "...like a Wednesday storm..." even though we have no idea what it means. Poetry doesn't always have to mean, but it has to make us feel something. And yours does. Nice work.

My Life

I made bad choices in the past, but now it's different. I'm a whole new person. I make better choices now. My life has changed, The way I think has changed. I think about what I do before I do it.

I want to be a better person. I want to give back for what I have done in the past, This is my life on one else. I'm finally making the right choices and it feels good. It's my life and I'm taking control.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Well said, Smokey. We're very interested to learn how you made these changes, especially the changes in your thinking. We know there is no magic formula for change, so we want to know how it came about in your case. By the way, The Beat office can always use some (poorly paid) volunteers to help out, so if you want to give back to the community, it's a good start.

Eyes On The Prize

Thru the thick and thin, I keep my eyes on the prize
Motivation, never blink, never cry, like a snake's eyes
Go hard on the paint, stand tall wit' my crown
Hard nose grind, never let a hater keep me down
My stomach feelin' hungry, tryna eat in this game
I got a hunger for more, speedin' the fast lane
Enemies I despise, never stop me from my prize
Never blink, never cry wit' my eyes on the prize.

-Yung Cutte

From The Beat: Never let a hater keep you down? In reality, you are the only one keeping yourself down. You say you're keeping your eyes on the prize, but you have already given the prize away to a cold system that cannot care about you the way your loved ones do — the ones you left behind while you sped away from them in the fast lane. That hunger you have for more is definitely going to get you more — more of the same you're experiencing right now.

Where I Want To Go

I really don't have a place I really want to go in the world, but I think it would come to me. Usually people would have somewhere in the world they would kill to go to, I don't, though. I don't know why but I don't.

My family don't want me home. so I really don't have nowhere to go. I guess it will come to me later in life.

-Derek

From The Beat: Derek, the world is so big and there are many different place out there. We hope you get to experience some of those different places because travel makes us see things through the eyes of others, and makes us realize how small our own experiences are. There is a lot to learn about other people that can be gained by travel, almost anywhere you end up going. If someone gave you money and said, "This is only to be used for travel," where do you think you'd go? Maybe you could throw a dart at a map, and wherever it lands, that's where you'll go. If we had a chance, we would travel across the whole world just to experience different things and different cultures. Finally, what can you do to earn your family's trust back so that you can go home again?

I want to give back for what I have done in the past

Nothing But Killing

Nothing but killing
What is going on in this world
I guess they lost respect for each other
I remember it was nothing but love
Now kids are killing each other

What happened with kid stuff
Basketball, football, and soccer
What happen with going to the mall
And the movie night

Guess being in here change me a lot
Also change the world
I wish I could go back
To all those good times.

-Maniac

From The Beat: Times lost or times spent behind bars are never to be gained back. However, you can always re-create those good times by getting out of here and staying out of here, which means by doing what you know will keep you free. Thank you for sharing with us your piece in class, Maniac.

I Would Like To Go

Where I would like to go is to Acapulco in Mexico. I would like to go there because I've never been there and my cousin told me that it's cool. He told me that there is a lot of girls. It will be a good experience to go there. Lots of people go there. Well, that's where I would like to go.

-Meza

From The Beat: We have heard that Acapulco is very beautiful, and not only the girls but the countryside. Anywhere else you'd like to see, Meza? Anywhere you might want to go to just to see or experience something different?

Thinking

Right now I'm in juvi and can't get out. All I'm thinking of is what's happening in my homie's court. He is being charged with attempted murder. Now I feel bad because I can't put money in his books or do dirt with da homie. He's doing a while, but homie, when you get out, I'll be waiting for you with couple forties.

-Danny

From The Beat: Danny, your homie is already facing a serious charge — and possibly long, long years behind bars — and all you feel bad about is that you can't do dirt with the homie? Shouldn't you be worrying about something else, something that will keep you from a similar fate. We can promise you that when he's done with what lies ahead, he won't be thinking about you and the forties you plan to have waiting for him. He'll have more serious things on his mind. We wish you did too.

Long To Go

I long to go find my sister, Silver. She was adopted when she was still a baby. I don't know that much about her, but I would like to meet her and just to look at her and see if we have any resemblance. But I would like to meet her.

-Gg

From The Beat: Finding your sister is a goal worth going after, Have you tried looking for her? Was she adopted? Put in foster care? Is there anyone in your family that might know and tell you? We hope you will find her, not just for her sake, but for yours, as well.

Usually people would have somewhere in the world they would kill to go to, I don't, though. I don't know why but I don't.

Europe

I've been wanting to go to Europe. I've been wanting to go to like Spain, France, and other places like that over there. I had the chance to go this year with my school but since I got locked up I lost my chance. Now if I plan to go later on, I ain't gonna have the same experience I would have had if I woulda gone with the school.

-Edgardo

From The Beat: Missed the ride! That's a heavy price to pay for whatever it was you decided was more important... We hope you get the chance to go to Europe (and other parts of the world) but it's our experience that nothing is more educational and mind-expanding than leaving our own little worlds to see how others live and how they see things. Why have you wanted to go to Europe, or the two countries you mentioned in particular? What is there in Europe that attracts you to want to go?

A Beat To The Judge

If I could send a Beat to someone, it will be the judge. I will show her that lots of people are trying to change their lives around and show her what we been going through — that people been growing up without a dad or a mom or raised in a 'hood seeing people die in front of their eyes. Seeing family members pass away, and them people are willing to change their lives.

-Dumbo

From The Beat: The Beat is widely distributed to those that want to read it, which includes judges, DAs, POs, and families of those that are incarcerated. Will you personally mail this Beat to the judge? Or will you hand-deliver it to her and show her the voices of many incarcerated youth?

The Reason

The reason why I got locked up was because I made a wrong choice and I'm facing a year or more. It's not good, but I think that it would be a better choice for me 'cause if I get out, I know I'm going to mess up just like I did. But I'm not trying to come back after I bounce. So if I was any of y'all, I wouldn't mess up and do what you got to do.

-Hector

From The Beat: We only hope the same advice you give out will apply to yourself as well. No one ever tries to come back, but not trying to come back is not the same as trying to stay out. That requires some effort, some courage, some self-discipline and some maturity. We're not sure if you have those qualities or not, but your future actions will tell us. You will determine the answer yourself. Thanks for keeping it real with us, Hector. We hope that this will be the last time we see you in the halls.

Back To My Family

Where I wanna go first. I would go back to all my family at da Island dat worry about me. So I won't come back to this stuff I'm doing. The last places I would go to is to Iraq to see da different of dat country and my country.

-T1

From The Beat: Are you talking about the island of Samoa? Were you born there? Have you been there? What is it like. We have never been, so educate us. If you go to Iraq, do you think the experience will change some of the ways you think about things? We hope you get to travel to many countries so you can experience the world through the eyes of others — and then share what you've learned.

Hawaii

I wanna go to Hawaii because I heard that the vibe is hella different than here. I wanna go see the Hawaiian girls. I want to have different experience (if you know what I mean). I wanna see different places.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Hawaii is fun... take us with you. We hope that when you do get a chance to travel outside the small world that we all occupy, you'll want to experience more than just the girls!

Long To Go

A place I would go is Jamaica. That's where my family is from. It is also a very beautiful place in some part, like the beach. But the urban area is bad. It is not a place for tourist.

Even though I have family out there, I still don't think they will accept me. Most of my family left Jamaica and came to New York where they stay until this day.

-Tostsi

From The Beat: Jamaica sounds nice. Have you ever been there? Have you ever visited your family in New York? Do you want to? We've been to New York, but never to Jamaica, and we wouldn't mind going with you.

California is the beautifulest state in the United States and most of all the Bay Area ya dig. So appreciate yo' community and keep it solid.

Even though I have family out there, I still don't think they will accept me. Most of my family left Jamaica and came to New York where they stay until this day.

The Color Of My Life Is Black

I think being locked up and the situation that I am in right now, I think my color is black. Sometimes I think that I'm not going to have my freedom in a while.

But my family and my future is my motivation to change my life around. I am also tired of living the life of a gang member. That is why I accepted Jesus Christ in my heart. And I do see a lot of changes in my life since I accepted Christ. So if I can do it you can do it.

-Carlos

From The Beat: Carlos, we think the light is shinning through a crack right now, and once light peeps through, that crack gets bigger and bigger day-by-day, until the light starts pouring through, brightening everything in your life. Accepting the teachings of any and all the great religions of the world (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and so many more) is a wonderful way to see the light, and let it guide you to a brighter future, and we're happy it is happening to you. It can only get brighter from here...

USA

I don't know what to say, but I love America. If you think about it, other countries are against their government because the rules aren't agreed. But we are free. So appreciate it. It's the best place to get a decent job and do whateva you want, you smell me?

Schwarzenegger, the governor isn't doing a good job as governor. California is the beautifulest state in the United States and most of all the Bay Area ya dig. So appreciate yo' community and keep it solid.

-Feez

From The Beat: What is your basis for comparison that leads you to believe that California is the most beautiful state, or that America is the freest country? Have you visited all the other 49 states to see whether they are more or less beautiful? Have you experienced the freedom that people in Europe enjoy? There is no doubt that America does offer many freedoms that many other countries do not offer, and it's good advice to appreciate the good things that this country has to offer. But we think you need to see some of the rest of the world before you conclude that you're living in the best country. After all, are you really free? Do you know that this country puts more people in prison than any other country in the world? Do you know that California has condemned more people to death than any state in the United States? All we're saying is we hope you get to do some traveling outside the little world you occupy to experience other cultures and other points of view.

Livin'

Livin' life for the cash and the cars we want
Not givin' a damn about the law and the cops we taunt
We all want that fairytale life for ourselves
Living happily ever after with no worries about ourselves
But we all know things don't come easy
So we might do stuff that's wrong, believe me
Robbin', hustlin' and pimpin' are of the everyday task
Danger lurks in the streets filled with happy-faced masks
Backstabbers and two-timers out to get you
Decoys and narcs used to catch you
We duck an dodge whatever comes our way
But in the end, I worry about what has become of my life and of my every day

-Vago

From The Beat: We worry about your life, too, Vago, and the lives of all the young men and women the system sweeps into its jaws. Some will be ground up and digested, like so much hamburger. But others have that certain something — a mind, a heart, a soul, a dream — and they will not so easily be consumed. You are in that category, so we have very high expectations for you and your future. We have those hopes because you have those hopes. Make them come true!

Crystal Meth

Crystal, damn I remember how it messed up my life. I won't lie, it was sick using it, with a little pebble you got your heart beating hella fast, and that little shhh will last about for half a day. It was cool, that it made you want more and more and more.

But the more you smoke it, the more you can't handle yourself. It makes you feel like everybody is looking at you, and if you got an enemy, it will make you feel like you got hella balls to kick his butt. I tell you it's tight, off the look, whatever you want to say, homie, but it messes up your life in many ways.

It messed my life up so it probably messed up yours. It made me hit my mom, made me run away; it made me hang out with gang bangers, and now I got hella enemies. And I'm in San Mateo Juvenile Hall doing time. And now I say forget that. I will give you advice: don't do it. Now that I left it, I'm changing my life around. Late homies.

-Duende

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing the heartaches crystal meth has caused in your life, and for your excellent advice. We hope everyone who reads your strong words will learn something from this piece and stay off those drugs that feel good at the moment, but mess the future up, sometimes permanently. Can we give you a word of advice, too? It's this: Don't try to conquer your addictions without the support of others who have been through it. It's easy to stay off the stuff when you're locked up and can't get it. But once you are able to make your own choices again, the same temptations that led you to use meth in the past will still be there to lure you back, to make you think you can handle just one hit... and then you're lost. So find others through NA or other programs that know what you've been through, and who are still clean. Good luck!

When You See Your Mother Cry

When you see your mother cry
It hurts more than receiving a bullet wound in a gang fight
You wanna act tough
You wanna be tight with the homies,
But you go your mom back at home full of worries
"Is my kid all right?" That the only thing flowing through your mom's head
While you too busy getting high sniffing on cocaine
To your mind it's a blast
To your time is the past
See many people send their mothers flowers in the funeral homes
But when God has blessed us and have our jefitas alive
We don't treat her like Queen
And give her her throne!

-Lil' Smiley

From The Beat: This flow should open some eyes, make people think about their actions and their lives. It's 'bout time someone put some sense into the heads of kids hurting themselves and making their loved ones weep. Too many tears have been shed, so let it stop with you. What gift do you think every mother wants most from her child? Is it a throne, or is it her child with her, home and safe? Thank you for this wonderful flow, Lil' Smiley.

Gang Banging

I think that at the age that I am at, gang banging is helping us because most people that are on my hype just start their own gang. I thought that they were going to be on my side, but when I got shot and got out of the hospital, I got arrested and charged with possession of a shotgun.

My friends were telling on me, and I thought that they would be there. Now I know that when it comes down to hard time, people are not down how they say they are. But that was just something that is going to help me in the long run because most people fake and I can read body language and how they act also. So to everyone choices of friends, make good ones.

-Young G

From The Beat: Young G, we are not understanding how gang banging is helping you in any way. If you are trying to tell us that by banging you realize who your true friends are and who are not, it seems like those you thought were your true friends have sold you down the river. Even worse than what "they" have done, is what you are doing to yourself. One of the reasons we wish you could read the big Beat is so that you could read the many, many pieces we publish every week from OGs now spending long years, or their entire lives, locked behind razor wire and high walls. They have realized too late how valuable the gift of freedom is, and they wish every day that they could go back and change the thinking that led them there. Like you, they were only children when they thought they understood so much, and carried on their lives without thinking the consequences they now face would ever happen to them. We hope you start thinking now, while you have a chance to make the changes they can only dream of.

Reppin' A Better Life

Hating my life locked in jail
Chose to do crime and now I fail
My life was hard on the streets I lived
Now lost my life, freedom, and kids
All because I smoked my meth
Now I watch my life going down the drain
All because I slung crack cocaine
All just to kick it with friends and homies
I should have did what my mother told me
Go to school, get a life, follow your dreams
Stay in school, get a life, follow your dreams
Stay off drugs and do what's right
But instead I put up a fight
Now look I'm locked up for good
Shouldn't have listened to the homies in the 'hood
Well, I know when I go back home for good to stay
I'll remember the choices I made that day
Not to do better today this time
Pray to God so I don't do crime

-Young Cherrio

From The Beat: It is still not too late to listen to what your mother has told you. You can still go back to school and follow your dreams. In fact, if you do anything else, you'll be giving up that most cherished gift of all after life itself, and that is your freedom. Your freedom is in your hands. No one can make you do anything you don't want to do. Praying to God that you don't commit crimes is only worthwhile if you are determined not to commit more crimes. The freedom that God gave you is the freedom to do good or bad, so the choice is yours. Deal with your meth habit seriously, or it will certainly bring right back here. That is not something you want to try to deal with alone. Find the help you need. It's out there.

I should have did what my mother told me
Go to school, get a life, follow your dreams

Going To Hawaii

When I leave to my group home, I will start doing my business like listen to the stuff, doing the work they tell me to do and by following all the rules. And when I finish my three year in the group home, I will look for a job that could pay me a lot of money. And I will be saving my money so I could have a lot. When I do, I will take my family to Hawaii and from there I will get even a better job so I could help my family pay the rent and for some good, so they could eat.

Also, I would take my girlfriend with me too, and we will get marry in Hawaii and have a party with my whole family. But first I have to get out of the group home that I am going and then we could talk about what is going to happen. I know I could do all this stuff if I really want for my mom to feel proud of me. And so I won't be hurting her like I am doing right now you feel me.

-Jose

From The Beat: Jose, sounds like you have a floor plan all drawn out. Our advice is to take it one day at a time. Just keep putting one foot in front of the other, and soon you'll be looking back to see just how much territory you've traveled! Just remember, in order to get a job that pays you a lot of money, you need the high school (and college?) degree that accompanies the job requirement. So start thinking what you might be interested in to study, and look into colleges that offer that specific skill. Good luck with your plan!

Is This The End?

Is this the end of a love that lasted so long
of a friendship so strong?
Is this the end? Is this the end of talking on the phone
telling each other that we don't want to be alone?
Is this the end? Is this the end?
Well, I never wanted to see again
but my heart is telling me I'm losing a best friend.
Is this the end?

-Mrs. Taliban

From The Beat: This is a question you will have to answer yourself. It's hard to keep a relationship going when the other half of that person's heart is not with them. Relationships are hard enough when both people are together working things out. When they are separated by walls, such relationships cannot last long. We're curious about your Beat name... Do you know anything about the Taliban? Do you know, for example, that they hate Christians? Or that they forbid women to be educated, to drive, to show any part of their bodies in public except for their eyes? Do you know that they cut the hands of people who steal? If you know all these things and you still want to be called "Mrs. Taliban," we'd like to know why.

A Gangsta's Prayer

Dear Lord,

Here I am at Your feet asking You to forgive me for my sins. Why does life have to be this way? See, they say it's the white man I should fear, but it's my own raza doing all the killing here. 'Hood vs. 'hood. What are they fighting for? Is it to prove to their homies that they're down for the hood?

See, at night I ask God how is this going to end? Is it with a bullet wound or a knife to the side? The homies say we gotta do this for the pride. I say challes, where's the pride in seeing that mother's cry when her son and daughters die!

It's a crazy world. This ain't for the weak-minded, dat's why they commit suicide. Only the strong survive, so I say, Dear Lord, don't forget me tonight! So I could see another bright star light up my life.

-Lil' Smiley

From The Beat: This is a wonderful and very moving prayer, Lil' Smiley. The violence might never end, but you can end it for yourself, and the thinking you show us in this piece suggests to us that you are moving in that direction. You've taken the first step to lead yourself away from the lies that lead Latinos think it's cool to kill other Latinos, or Blacks to kill other Blacks, or anyone who believes in God to kill anyone else who was created by God. When we look around, we see almost no one who is leading in a positive direction — not community leaders, not the police, not counselors, not governors or presidents, not homies. We are desperate for leaders, so lead the way so that others might follow. You can't change those that don't want to change, but you can change yourself as you live through this struggle. God has given you a great gift — a brain — and you are wise enough to respect that gift and put it to good use. Congratulations! You are beginning to think for yourself, and that is the beginning of true wisdom.

Something To Think About

Our lives from day one weren't all the same
Some were born into wealth, but me the game
The game of surviving and staying alive
I remember being young around the age of five
No worries and no enemies for me to look out for
Little did I know the family was close to being poor
We struggled for a while, but later became stable
Six different chairs, newspaper covering, and a handed down table
Money was finally stable, and everyone had a job
But me, I needed money so the plan was to rob
Stores, people and houses were my choices
I ignored at the time them helpful voices
Telling me there was another option to getting paid
And that real money should be worked for and made
So years later from my start of my crimes
I realize that others can relate after reading these rhymes

-Vago

From The Beat: Many people can relate, Vago. You are not alone in this world, nor are you the only one that has had to struggle through poverty. But what sets you apart is that you have used your brain to examine your life and your choices, and you have seen that there are options, as difficult as they might be. You are turning into quite a poet and quite a teacher. Do you know the story of the tortoise and the hare (rabbit)? The moral of that story is that "slow and steady wins the race." The shortcuts you were taking have hurt you and your family, but they have also helped you to realize that you have the talents to do it the right way, the slow and steady way. And anyone with your remarkable skills does not need to steal from others in order to make it in this world. Not everyone is so blessed, so treat this blessing as a gift, and use it wisely.

Pain

I have all this pain that I hold inside
and I don't have a shoulder to lean on and cry.
I have all this pain.
While the sun shines for everyone else, my days are filled with rain.
I try many ways to make my pain go away,
but no matter how hard I try my pain always seems to stay.
No one has ever seen this side of me
'cause I always put a smile on and act as happy as I can be.
Will this pain ever leave me? It seems like forever that I've had this pain. I'm down on my knees praying that this pain will hurry up and leave. My family always tell me that I'm causing them pain, and when they tell me that I just want to yell at them and say, "Well, do you know what pain I'm going through?" Sometimes I wish I could be on my own, but then I'm glad I'm not, 'cause pain is a part of life that you have to go through to grow.

-Brown Eyes

From The Beat: Brown Eyes, pain is something that everyone has in life, just as joy is something that everyone has in life. We are sure you have experienced both, so you are wrong to think that you alone are in pain. We all are at different times — and most especially at your age. Yes, we remember that pain so very well, but we know it does not last forever, so keep your eyes forward. We promise you that you will not always feel this way, even though right now you think you will. Whenever, you feel that you have no one to talk to or no shoulder to lean on, pick up a piece a paper and let your thoughts out. Let your pain travel from within you to your hands and out on paper. Maybe you should have a talk with your family and let them know what you are going through, not when they are yelling at you, but when you're feeling good about yourself and can talk. You should be getting support from them, you shouldn't be holding all this pain inside you and going through it by yourself. Just remember, The Beat will always have open ears for you. All you have to do is write.

...they say it's the white man I should fear, but it's my own raza doing all the killing here. 'Hood vs. 'hood. What are they fighting for?

Point Blank

I see life and death through my so-very-experienced eyes
All it takes is a split second for chaos to undisguise
At point blank things can really affect you
It influence your life and future actions you might do
So me, I try not to blink and get caught blind
Because then you might lose yourself and ya wind
Think about where your feet have brought you
And open your eyes and really look at what you want to

-Vago

From The Beat: The path you've walked has led you here/But now, at last, your brain is in gear/That's the difference between boy and man/ And it's why The Beat is a big Vago fan/If you learn from the past, it's like treasure, like wealth/You can guide the young homies... but start with yourself!

Never Will You Be Dead In My Heart

Damn carnal, I just can't believe you left my side just like that. I just can't understand why God had to take you without a good-bye. I always go to sleep with this emptiness in my heart that don't let me eat or sleep!

I wake up the same, but wanting to cry, 'cause I know you won't ever come back, and also knowing those memories will always be alive in my heart. It make me wanna cry, but at da same time, gives me a smile for those wonderful times! It's just hard knowing you tore my heart.

I sometimes say to myself why did it have to be you? Why? I just can't understand it and know my life will never be the same without you. I know that for a fact!

I remember getting da bad news. It was like at 9:00 p.m. when I heard the phone ring. It was my jefita who answered. I was by her side when she broke down and cried. I was there telling her what was wrong. I picked up the phone and my sister-in-law tells me my brother is shot. I thought it was in the leg or something, but then my mama tells me he's dead!

As we drove where he was, I had no tears or pains 'cause I hoped it wasn't gonna be him! As we went, I saw cops and blood all over and somebody on the floor with blood all over. As I see the yellow string that means somebody is dead. I stood there as I felt dese thing in me when suddenly my body stopped moving and I felt everything froze, and I turned and looked at my mama sit there by his side, shooting tears.

I looked at everybody like my family in shock as I go toward my mom, not knowing what to do, but to pray and just stay by her side. Then da cops came and tell me if my brother had tats. I said yeah, and they asked me what he had. I told them he had my mama's name and his kid's name, and also the Virgin and just a rosary tatted in his hand with his name. They just looked down and didn't say a word. I asked them if it was him, and then they took a picture and showed it to me, and I broke down on my knees and cry.

What I couldn't stand is looking at my mom suffer and not being able to do something. Da next day I was in dinner. I couldn't eat or sleep. I was just watching his videos and playing his favorite oldies as I sit and watch his pictures. Then I decided da only thing that will take my tears and all the pain I had were drugs. I couldn't talk to anybody 'cause I felt depress and at da same time I hate. I felt a lot of anger for everybody, so I started to do crystal to do crystal meth for what my brother died for.

I used to go out not caring about my life no more. I was living pretty bad, not caring if I made my jefite shed tears. Finally, his funeral came. I refused to go to his funeral 'cause I was in meth and I thought everybody was BSing me. Finally I decided to go. I went and my mom was standing by his casket shedding tears while my family try da best to sit by her side. I couldn't even shed tears 'cause I was still in denial!

Then it was time to go, so I sit by da casket as I feel something in me. Then we all went home and the next day we went to Sky Lawn. Dat day was when I wasn't in drugs. I sit there just looking at my family and seeing how many tears were coming out of their eyes! Dat's da last good-bye.

Now it has been five months since he passed away, but day and nights dat pass, I get more pain. But sometimes I get a smile for all the memories we had. I also remember you always saying I was your twin and when me and you used to go cruising and when we will prank-call each other and you used to say you was my ninja. Damn, funny as shhh. I also remember when I didn't know how to swim and you threw me in da water and I almost drown. Dat was funny 'cause you taught me something.

But what I will never forget is when me and you sat and cried together and talked about problems while we sat and hear oldies! Damn, carnal you will always be alive in my heart. I know it won't be easy to not cry, but damn them memories were only some. I will always keep them inside and never will I let go. You wasn't just a brother, you was like my dad. You were half of my heart... that now is torn apart!

Always Tiny.

-Tiny

From The Beat: This is a very sad and loving tribute, Tiny. In truth, it made us cry. It talks about the close relationship you had with your brother how much you loved him and all the pains you are going through since he passed away. But here's what we want you to think about, as you so righteously grieve for him, and that is that everybody has someone who they feel this way about, and when they lose that someone, they feel the same pain you are feeling. They are left with the same questions ("Why you?") that you are left with. Their tears are just as real as your tears, and their loss just as powerful as yours. That is what Jesus meant when He said: "Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:43-48) Your brother is now with his Creator, and he won't be happy to see you suffer because of him. Your family and mother need you Tiny, especially your mother. She has already lost one child to the streets. Don't let her lose another to the system, or do drug addiction. Don't let this drag you down and ruin your life. Think about your mother, Tiny. Think about your family. Pour your anger, your pride, and your love out on these pages, but not on the streets. Your brother wants you to live long, and keep him alive in your heart.

Don't Want To Say Good-Bye

As I sit at night and cry
Blood is dripping from my heart
I have so much pain, I'm hurt a lot
I just feel like a sugar cookie
Falling apart
It hurts so much the fact I know I get to say good-bye
Knowing I don't want to leave your side.
But what keeps me strong is knowing
I will always maintain our memories alive
In my heart and always will I have your soul and heart in me!

-Tiny

From The Beat: Tiny, you have a very loving heart/Let it guide you to a new start/What you do now affects what comes late/Don't mess it up with anger, meth or hate/Become the young woman we know you can be/Proud, loving, responsible and free!

You wasn't just a brother, you was like my dad.
You were half of my heart...
that now is torn apart!

My Angel Baby

Every time I look into your eyes
It makes me wanna cry
For da love I have for you I keep inside
If you only know how you changed my life
You brought me happiness and at da same time love
I just thank God for sending me an angel from up above
I know you ain't by my side right now but I know
Someday I'll be around your arms again and never will let go!

-Tiny

From The Beat: If you truly think of this "angel" as a gift from God, then don't you think you owe God something in return? What do you think God wants from you?

Always And Forever

I used to not believe in love. I used to think of always playing, until I got tired and an angel stepped into my life and made me realize love isn't just games.

Now every day I wake up wanting to cry 'cause now this person really won my heart and soul and it just make me strong knowing this person always and forever will be in my heart!

-Tiny

From The Beat: Love is hard to find, and when you find it, cherish it. However, remember this too. Love requires work, because it can bring as much pain as joy.

In a way it's like hiding the truth from us. What are they hiding?

I Love You

You walked into my life when I was down and out.
You took away my pain when you gave me your cute smile.
You showed up in my class and you were very shy.
That's when I knew I had to make you my guy.
You told me that you loved me.
When you told me that, I knew we were meant to be.
I want you to know that I love you too.
Sometimes you do things that make me sad,
and sometimes you do things that make me really mad.
But in the end, I want you to know love is pain, love is hurt,
but no matter what, our love will always work

-Marisa

From The Beat: This is a sweet love poem, but as we have said in the past (many times), The Beat is not your personal mailbox. This belongs in an envelop and mailed to that special person. The Beat is to educate us (and all our readers) about your life, your hopes, your plans for the future, etc. This is not just about your piece, but a number of "love" letters we allowed in this issue since we no longer get to see you face-to-face and remind you why we have The Beat. From now on, we will not be typing or publishing your personal love letters (or any personal love letters, so you can tell your homegirls, too). You need a 39 cent stamp and an envelop. Use The Beat for what it's intended to be. Thank you.

I Love You Baby

Hey, what's up with you my sexy princess? How are you doing? Well, if you're wondering about me, I am doing alright. I'm just trying to get through this slow dead time so I can get out and see you. But for now while I'm in here, I just basically stare at your picture and doze off into fantasies for hours and hours, so that picture you sent me helps out a lot.

I wish you could send me over a hundred pictures of you so I could put them in my room and just stare at them all day. I'm also doing a lot of push ups and a lot of sit ups, 'cause my goal is to accomplish 90,000 push ups and to also walk out of this place with a nice, clean six pack. (LOL). So that's keeping me kind of occupied if you know what I mean....

Oh yeah, this is another thing that I go through every single night... check out my lyrics:

Sexy little smile with those sexy lips
Thinking about the first time that we ever kissed
Looking in your eyes, catching the sparkle of light
Getting lost forever, wondering if I'm right
I wake up in the dark, and realize it's the same dream I have every night

-Afraid To Sign

From The Beat: We included about half of this love letter. The reasons we didn't include all of it are, first it is a personal letter and, as such, should be put in an envelop with a 39 cent stamp and mailed; and second, you didn't find it important enough to put your name, so we didn't find it important enough to publish all of it.

Crack In My Neighborhood

I came from the streets of the city
Where crack in my neighborhood will always be
It's been around my 'hood all my life
And it's not going down without a fight
People seen the sights, things and sorrow it brings
I'm trying to tell you it turns people to fiends
It makes moms and dads abandon their kids
Why else do you think I'm letting you know the biz.
Well, if you ask me once then I'm going to tell you twice,
Crack in your neighborhood ain't nothing nice.

-Gee

From The Beat: What can we or you do about crack in our neighborhoods, Gee? Right now, the drug problem is dealt with in the criminal justice system. Is this where you think it belongs? We're old enough to remember a time before crack. Is there anything community leaders (or you) can do to create a world after crack?

The Big Beat

What's up Beat? What I don't get is why we can't take the "Big Beat" to our units. This is for us, right? We only can have The Beats from our juvenile hall, but not other juveniles.

I would like to know what people in the city and in the town think, and if they going through the same thing like me. I would like it if we can get the real thing and not the a slice of it.

In a way it's like hiding the truth from us. What are they hiding? What's the big deal? Well get back at me when you can... Free Paco.

-Paco

From The Beat: We would like that too, Paco. The Beat is made for you all and it is made by you all, and we think you all should get the whole pie rather than just a slice. However, as long as we are guests here, we have to accept the rules "they" impose. At the same time, we think you are asking excellent questions, and if you get any answers, we hope you share them with us.

Miami

If I could take a trip to a place I have never been and want to go, it would probably be to Miami, for a lot of reasons. One because it's hot over here; two, because I want to visit the clubs out there, and the beaches! Third, because the girls, there are a lot of good looking girls out there.

-Gee

From The Beat: Is there anywhere else you would like to go, Gee? Somewhere out of the U.S? Somewhere foreign to you? Maybe you can take The Beat to Miami with you because we sure would like to see those beaches too!

Unknown Future

I don't know what's happening with my case
Heart pounding like I just got out of a cop chase
I can't believe the snitch saw my face
Damn, judge ain't given me no space
I don't want to change my pace

-Skit-Z

From The Beat: Skit-z, remember what the general rules are for writing for The Beat. No threats, and nothing that will incriminate you. Tell you what, if you don't change your pace but just keep living the way you have been, you'll always be having to worry about snitches and judges.

Happiness

Joy and emotions of happiness make a light at the end of the tunnel. The joy is your heart that should not stop beating. My heart will be strong until the sun bright light puts a smile on my face. That will bring me happiness.

-Beenz

From The Beat: Are you getting close to the end of the tunnel? Do you see the light that's coming through? You will see it soon Beenz, we know you will.

Miami

I would love to go to Miami and stay in a rich hotel at the beach where there's a lot of females and order room services all day, every day. And to Europe in Amsterdam and travel all over and meet females.

-Fredy

From The Beat; Well Fredy, if that is your plan, how will you go back achieving it? We hope do, especially the part about getting out of this country for a while. We know that if you do that, you will quickly there's a lot more reason to travel than just to meet females. What's your plan?

Life In The Bay

Living in the Bay for sixteen whole years.
Am surprised I'm still alive since I shed so many tears.
Life in the Bay is a risk you make.
I'm trying to do right and achieve all my goals.
But there is always problems everywhere that I go

-Chamuco

From The Beat: When you are faced with problems, you can do two things: deal with them or run away from them (through drugs, flight, etc). The more you run away, the more problems you're going to create. Living in the Bay is not a risk (except that life everywhere is a risk) unless you are doing risky things, and if you are, it doesn't matter where you live.

I wish you could send me over a hundred pictures of you so I could put them in my room and just stare at them all day.

Crack

thizzin', drinkin', hella smokin'
goin' tony montana in a mountain of coke and
crack cocaine
it'll make you insane
like burnin' holes in yo' brain
cryin' lord, stop the pain
leaving a stain
life in the fast lane
goin' right down the drain
jesus christ what a shame

-The One Keith

From The Beat: For what it's worth, the dope game sustains hell on earth — a perfect profit machine that devours dreams and kills humanity, drowning the knock in shame and the corner thug in vanity, feeding the system's need on young thugs' mindless greed while sowing the seeds of despair as far as eyes can see down a dead-end ghetto street. Crack ain't black, buying and selling are both wack!

Cops Gave Me a Break

Yes, I've had a break. When I got caught with five sacks of weed and they found it. All they did was take me to the station and had my mom pick me up.

Or one time when I was stealing two bottles of Jack Daniels, I got caught, and they let me friend's dad pick me up. So, I can say that the cops have given me a break in the past — but not this time! 'Cause now I find myself at Camp Sweeney.

-Sneeze

From The Beat: It doesn't sound like you used those breaks to think over what the consequences of what you were doing would be if the police had not on those two occasions decided to give you another chance. It's almost like you decided the opposite, right? "Even if I get caught, the worst that will happen is that my mom will find out." If we're wrong about this, tell us so — but, believe or not, the Camp is one more chance to think things through and change what you choose to do (at Camp for sure, but even more importantly when you're free).

East and West

East Oakland got all the pills, girls, weed and guns anybody could want. We got real ninjas, too. But one thing we don't got in the east is 'bo — you gotta go to the west for that. Because the east got so much going down, people always claiming the east when they ain't really from there.

I also want to say that The Beat is bootsie. Y'all don't even put everything I write in the magazine! At least you could put important stuff in there. I'm out. Y'all be playin' games!

-Dedo

From The Beat: You need to slow your role and think about what The Beat is about: making better decisions on the outs, so you can be safe and free. So when you tout violence and crime, claiming your turf is the baddest of all time (or whatever words you want to put on it), of course we're not going to print it. Moreoever, we don't work for the system but come here because we want to help you. You have to be here, we don't. We offer you through our time and labor, this space for your words to speak — but not when you disrespect us. The game you need to worry about people playing is the one that got you locked up and just might take your life if you return to it.

Give Me A Break

I think the judge has given me a break before I see the real time. I went to court today and the judge decided to send me back to Camp Sweeney to do another quick program. This is probably my last chance because I already got a strike and he still sent me to an easy placement. So I think the judge is giving me a break.

-Zuko

From The Beat: Congratulations on your break. We hope you take it seriously as an opportunity to save your own life.

Back One Mo' Time Again

Yeah! What's up, Beat? I be back at it — one mo' 'gin! Know what I'm 'bout? I will be up out of here in about two weeks. Catch me on that good-good street doin' what I'm best at. You feel me?

But I really don't have nothing to say but keep yo' head up in here. And all y'all in here be cool and try to make his y'all last time. For keep y'all head up.

-Lil' Rio

From The Beat: How you going to tell people to stay out of lock up while at the same time just waiting to re-up on your dope sales in the street? Rio, you're lost, and until you find the truth, you'll keep paying the cost. If you really have love for Laron, tell him the life y'all living is wrong. If this is what you do best, find something new — give it a rest!

Crack and My Community

Yeah, I can imagine what it was like before crack was in the community. Ninjas was broke! And there was less bums on the street at the same time. Muthafreakas started goin' bad off that stuff! They started disowning their families and all they' money got sucked up in a pipe.

-Lil' C-Money

From The Beat: Well, yeah, there were fewer homeless, and there were fewer youngsters flossing expensive clothes on the street — and fewer youngsters headed for the Pen' and the Y, or being raised more by counselors in juvenile hall than by their own families.

To Thunder Road

Well, this maniac that resides in Hayward, went to court today. The judge said that I am going to Thunder Road for three months. So this is my last time writin' in The Beat.

I want to send a shout out to Chucky. Keep yo' head up — er'rythang gon' be a'ight! I'll pray for you. Well, all, be coo'. And I'm out. Much love ...

-Chucky

From The Beat: Try to take the steps seriously even if no one else does. They really are freedom steps designed to free you from your own self-destructive patterns of behavior. Probably they'll teach you that it's all about following orders, and while you're there, it's a good idea to follow the rules — but that's not what the steps are about. They're about setting you free, teaching you to think for yourself and get right with God and man — or if you don't like the word God, call it "life" and discover what it really means to "live life to the fullest"!

Young Dad

I'm a young dad. I'm runnin' the East Palo Alto streets. I been runnin' the streets most of my life. When I became a dad, I really had to take care of my responsibility — anything movin', I was on it!

I do anything for mines! I'm also a god-dad, and I take care of that responsibility, too. Anything he need', I take care of it. If I got to do somethin' wrong, it's gon' happen! But I'm also gon' do the right thing by guiding them and teaching them how to become a man — and never to come to jail!

I want them to know that I'm a good dad, god-dad — and a real ninja who was out to get it every time they needed somethin'!

-Keith

From The Beat: And what if they needed a dad to be with them during all those times he was serving time for how he got his (their) money? Yes, they need money. Everyone needs money. But they need you to be there more than they need you to throw money at them and disappear — first for days at a time, then weeks, months and years in the system. How is that going to teach them to stay out of jail. "Do what I say, not what I do," doesn't work — most especially if they love you! So if you teach them to love you for being "a real ninja getting money by any means", you're teaching them to try to be like their OG Dad, well-meaning but bad — and too confused to realize the only way to teach them how to turn out good is to be a proper role model for them (and staying free) in the 'hood. Don't confuse a pocket full of money with self-respect, or think a new pair of Jordans makes up for a father's absence (personal neglect).

Freedom Rings

man we all want to be free
but what do the flea want
man the flea have problems
man deal with the bloody spot
you don't have no freedom
so think about what you want
before you end up broken
man — help wanted in the spot
you don't need to start with the problems
we don't need to hear from the spot
the spot have problems
"it all about oakland"
LOL (laugh out loud)
freedom ring — see ya

-Melilena Snow Bunny

From The Beat: We're not sure what you mean by "the flea". Maybe it's a metaphor, and the same way fleas live off the bloody spot of the dog (say), thugs live off the bloody spot in the community. Got to find another way if a thug really wants to hear the sound of freedom ringing!

One Break, One Time

I remember one time me and a couple of my homies got surrounded by thirty people tryin' to jump us. I pulled out a knife — then five-oh came and everybody ran!

Then my and my homeboy walked across the street and five-oh stopped us and searched us. I had ten pills on me, but they didn't find them. And he pulled out my knife and gave it back to me. Then he searched my homeboy and pulled out a long screw driver and gave it back to my homeboy.

Other than that, five-oh is always being grimy. One time undercover stopped me 'cause I was taking a piss on a doorstep! This was all in San Francisco — San Francisco is where I belong.

-Lazy

From The Beat: It is not cool to piss on anyone's doorstep, or any store's doorstep either. There are other places you can find that are not directly disrespectful to that homeowner or store owner. So that's not a very good example of police abuse of power. But that first story shows that those guys understood your need to defend yourselves in that environment where gangs supposedly on the same side are jumping each other day and night. So why you wanna name yourself after a fictional Italian gangster family that suffered so many tragedies and deaths. Don't you remember how the Godfather wanted his youngest son to quit and go legit? Or do you plan to bang in prison? For your mother's, lady's and future children's sakes, we hope not — and most of all for your sake!

Free Write

Well, what's happenin' y'all? I'm hella juiced that I am gettin' out the Hall! I was starting to feel like the walls were closing in on me. I think my roommate is getting out a few days after me!

But anyways, the reason I am juiced, is because I am gonna get a chance to see my brother and sister whom I haven't seen in about a month! I hella miss them!

-TheoryOne

From The Beat: In theory that's all good news! For sure it'll have you juiced! But now getting out is just the start, 'cause staying out is the crucial part. You don't want a replay of how you've been feeling up till today. Okay? Might we suggest you abandon gang-related spellings as a start to freeing your mind from the street definition of heart — 'cause how can it be heart if from your loved ones it tears you apart. Free write is cool but finish school, get a j-o-b and stay free!

God's Break

This is one more break from GOD. He put me here for I could see the light. This my callin' from God now, 'cause when I was out he was givin' me too many blessings, and I want to thank Him for all He as done for me.

Now I see the light, so when I get out I'm going to have to go the right way. So I'm gon' holla next week... holla at yo' boy: January, 30, 2007.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: This is one of the most positive pieces you've written so far, Lil Rome, and it's good to hear that you've found something you could believe in while you were in this dark place. What does 'going the right way' mean to you? Is it just about your relationship with your faith, or is it also about how you live your life on the daily? What kinds of things are you going to have to change, minute by minute, now that you've "seen the light"?

Given A Break

I been given many breaks by the police but I need a break by the jury when I go to trial because the jury really decided. If I get my break I promise myself to do what i have to do to reach my goals. But I believe I'm going to get it sometime soon -- and be on my way to get started.

-Marcus

From The Beat: The Beat has told you this and written it before, but we'll say it again. We admire the way you keep your spirits up and your laughter in place while all this stress is going on in your life and your trial. We know that it's hard to think about anything else when you're waiting for court dates, so our question for you is: What kinds of things do you do to take your mind of the stress? Do you read, write letters, study? How do you cope, day to day, with all of this?

License And Registration

I got one too many breaks from the police, like one time I was in my car driving to my girl's house to pick her up, and I had run a stop sign on my way to her house and a motorcycle cop pull me over and asked me for my license and registration.

And I had just had my registration and I got in his car and he let me go with a warning. He said if he see me again that night he gon' tow my car, and I went to my girl's house to pick her up to get some good good.

-Lil Rome

From The Beat: It's good to hear that you got that one break. Here's a question though ... did you decide to stop driving illegally after that? If you did, then great. If you didn't, was that cop really doing you a favor?

Gonna Change

I was given a break when I was stealing. That's when I got caught at court. I felt mad a little but I wasn't trippin'.

I know when I get out I'm going to change. He gave it to me to get my life straight.

Yes crack affects my community 'cause a lot of people is doing it. It would be wonderful but people still do other drugs. I really don't care I would never try it but it seems normal.

I really don't care about the Super Bowl.

-Deshawn

From The Beat: We're glad you wanna change, but tell us how! You're a brave young man to face your fears, so don't be scared to ask for help. Call up The Beat when you get out.

Super Bowl

I think it will be rough fight but Indianapolis will because there. Their QB is looking like he really wants to win 'cause since the conference final he showed what he can do. I think Chicago will put up a good fight but Indianapolis is looking like they really want to win so I think they might do it. Indianapolis might win.

-Lil' Shadow

From The Beat: You predicted it right! Nice guess.

Superbowl

The Chicago Bears is going to win fo' sure fo' sure. The reason I know they going to win is because they got the best defense in the league by far. The offense ain't all that good but as long as we can stop theirs we got a chance. So yep, I predict that we gon' win hands down.

Chicago-28, Indiana 14.

-Young Kraz

From The Beat: This happens to the best, wanting one team and the other wins. Maybe next year the Bears will win the Super Bowl, this year it was all Colts!

My Mind

You know what I think of The Beat? It can suck my ... and everybody that work for the beat I hope they die a really painful death! Every time you suckas come you mess up my phone call! You know how much a collect call cost? I didn't think so, to hell with The Beat and everything it stands for.

-Lil' C

From The Beat: Blaming us for your phone call! Hello? Anybody home? We've been coming to the hall regularly for years, so don't lay this trip on us about us messing up your phone call. Why you giving us shhh about the cost of a collect phone call? Do you pay the bill? For your information, over half of The Beat's staff been through jail, juvie, the pen, CYA, etc. You don't know! Plus, we accept collect calls all day from people all over that be feeling The Beat Within. You don't like what we are about, take it down! All you're doing is bumping yo' gums and running up yo' mama's phone bill, or yo' broads phone bill. If you don't like getting your calls interrupted when we come, then stay out of jail and go buy yo' self a metro PCS so you could talk all day, since you like to do that hella much.

No Breaks

I have never got a break from a cop but they let me get away twice.

-Sisco

From The Beat: What's the difference between giving someone a break and letting them get away? They sound the same to us!

Crack

I think crack affected my neighborhood because it's a hard drug and it kills a lot of people and hurts a lot of families and people. If crack would disappear I think that people would be going crazy, stealing and killing each other, and families would still be hurt so I say the world would still be crazy. It's called life and the world, "you feel me?" Stay up Beat.

-Daryus

From The Beat: We do feel you. If you could invent a thing that could replace crack yet do no harm to people's bodies and minds...what would it be? Can your imagination go there? It's a hard task.

My Thoughts On This Week's Topic

No, I haven't been given a break before.
Crack needs to be eliminated from our community because it's breaking our people up.
I want the Colts to win and I think they will because their offense will make the Bears defense look foolish.

-Winters

From The Beat: Appreciate your one sentence answers to our topics. Maybe next week you can push yourself a little bit further with examples to your statements.

Colts Win!

I want Indianapolis to win because I've been a fan of the Colts and to me they have more threats on Colts than the Bears so that's why I think also the Colts will win it. Plus I've always rolled with O.G. Peyton Manning.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We hope you got to watch your team win!

Selfish Dealer

Crack cocaine is something that everybody needs to know about because if you don't know nothing about it, somebody like me will tell you to try it, only if you buy it from me.

-Choyce

From The Beat: What a mess! You write like this, makes us glad you are off the streets! Be apart of the solution, do not continue to destroy your people, your community. Stop being the fool!

Super Bowl 2007

To me, I think Chicago will win because they just have a better team overall. Chicago has a very good defense from the line to the defensive backs.

I play with Chicago on Madden 2007, so I know how they play and their style. That's why I think Chicago will win — just because they're a better team.

-Doug-e-fresh

From The Beat: The better team doesn't always win on any given day. Maybe it was the slick, new balls provided by the league instead of by the teams that resulted in all those fumbles. Or maybe it was just Manning's day or Tony Dungy's!

A Question From TBW (The Beat Within)

TBW: Are you going to do your program?

David: I am going to do my program and get out this shhh. I'm about to be 18. I'm trying to get my life together and show everybody I can do right.

-David

From The Beat: We already believe you can do right, if that's something you really want. But we know from almost ten years of coming in and out of the halls that the people who make it are the ones who have a real plan. For example, if you had to write five steps to take in order to "get your life together," what would they be? Is it about who you hang out with? Is it about needing positive things to fill your time with? If it's about drugs, will you be able to quit on your own, or do you need help? Break it down – not for us, because we already believe in you – but for yourself!

The New Hall

I don't think building the new hall is going to change the people from coming because it's not about the discipline. If a person wanna change then they change, but if they don't then they don't. The people that's making it stricter doesn't change the people from coming like I said, it's a person wanting to change, that's how I feel.

-M

From The Beat: For a century, some folks have sold it to the people of California that building better jails will reduce crime. If you were given the power to make a big plan to give youngstas opportunities that would prevent them from ending up in juvi, what would it be? Schools? Sports? Jobs? Arts? Parks? What would you do for the community for $4million?

Happy Birthday, Mama

Mama, I'm sorry for being in this detention facility and not being their at the cemetery to see you, and I know that I've been doing wrong, but I want you to forgive me and now I'm going to complete my program wherever I go. I love you, mama. RIP.

-Lil' Dedaman

From The Beat: For your Mama the time is now to change. Drop the war stories and being the baddest thug, gangsta, the time is now to live a righteous life in the name of your Mama! Action speaks louder than words, what is your plan?

Went to Hayward Court

What's up, Beat! This Grim again. I just went to the Hayward Courthouse for a weapons charge. So far it's looking good, but it could change because of my background records.

Well, everything is going good so far, because I just got my overnighters: I go home from Saturday to Sunday! God, it feels good to go home! Well, for anyone who comes to Camp — good luck! Well, cats, that's all for now.

-Grim

From The Beat: We hope it keeps looking good on your road back to freedom, but that includes the inside work you have to do to stay free, too. Your past record may not get you in deeper with the court, but it should be a big, flashing warning sign to you! If you don't change what you choose to do, Camp will not be the worst thing that happens to you. Good luck, but put in the work, too.

I'm So Cold

A baby can I talk and tell you how I feel when I write you
I'm lonely it's like my room getting colder and my heart gone frozen.
Shaney when I'm getting lonely I can't do shhh
I can't read
I can't write
baby I can't sleep at night
so I write you my heart and you play with it
it's so cold you never write and send me a letter
so I wish you write
so my cold can get better in this weather
it's like I'm outside with no shirt
getting sick in the heart
when its cold or if it's hot on my spot
I'll still get sick in the heart 'cause I'm missing you from the start,
and no, I'm not complete without your heart.
Take a chance: Hold my hand 'cause it's pain and cold up in my heart.
Baby, I can't even speak where I want to start
My emotions coming out from the heart.
Shaney, a kiss is where it ends, where it starts. I'm so cold in the heart.

-Lil' Walt

From The Beat: We appreciate you writing this poem and sharing it with The Beat. We hope you also sent your thoughts, this piece, to Shaney. She is the one who needs to know. And if she has a change of heart, we wish you the best. If not, well, take a good look at yourself and figure out what you need to do, so next time you don't lose a good thing. It takes two to tango!

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

It's Gonna Be Chicago, Super Bowl 2007

I think this year is going to be Chicago because this year Chicago has been playing their best, and they had a lot of tough teams. But in another thing Indianapolis might win too. It's 'cause they always make a very good impression to the NFL league.

But, umm, I like the colors of the Bears so I'ma go with Chicago. But in another thing I think the Colts will win because Colt symbolizes the Horseshoe and that's lucky, so I think those teams going to win.

-Mikoo U7

From The Beat: You should enter politics, Mikoo. Like a politician trying to answer "yes" and "no" to the same question (so he gets both side's votes), you predict that the Bears will win and then you predict the Colts will win. One way or the other, you can't be wrong. But now we know Chicago lost, so does that make you wrong or right?

The Beat Within Interviews Mike

TBW: So, Mike, what's life gonna be like when you get out?
M: It's go' be real smooth
TBW: How?
M: By going to school every day and stayin' out of trouble.
TBW: Will that be easy for you?
M: No, not really, because I'ma be with my ninjas, and I know I'm a wanna do something stupid.
TBW: So do you think you will hang out with the same stupid people?
M: Yeah, because they my ninjas.

-Mike U3

From The Beat: We won't be interviewing you next time. We're interested in your own ideas and how you express them. Those "ninjas" you're going back to when you get out of here, are they doing your time for you?

The Colt's Will Win Super Bowl 2007

I think that the Colts is about to win because I think that they deserve it. They have a good defense, good offense, plus they got a great quarterback with a good cannon. I think I might bet my uncle on that game, probably not for much, but a lil' something

-Aaron U6

From The Beat: So, did your uncle pay up?

Can't Do Much More Time Down Here

The days in the Ranch are getting old
My body is oh, so cold
Four-hundred-plus days locked down
And still got more to do
Somebody help me
I don't know how much more
I could do

-Viera LCRS

From The Beat: It sounds like you're getting tired of the incarceration experience. Good! Have you found any strengths in yourself, from having to be down there for so long, that you didn't know you had before you were sentenced? You sound like you've learned patience and endurance. Stay strong!

No Crack, No Money

If there was no crack, I feel like there would be no money for the youngsters and there would be a lot more robberies because weed don't sell as fast as crack.

-Cuba U2

From The Beat: So, what you're saying is that in order for youngsters to make money, they have to poison their own neighborhoods? Have you really thought this through, or is this merely a justification for your own activities? Getting money by selling crack is a short-term benefit. What are the long-term consequences?

On My Hustle

Life to me is a full-time hustle. That's why I got my team and we got the muscle behind our hustle. That's why I don't know what I would do if crack wasn't around.

-Dubb U2

From The Beat: We can only hope that you'll open your eyes one day and realize that your hustling for the system, putting money in lots of people's pockets — from PDs to DAs, from POs to Judges, from cops to counselors. We're sure they're grateful to you for your efforts on their behalf.

I'm Going For The Colts

I think that the Indianapolis Colts gon' win the Super Bowl. They have a good team and they gon' win it.

-Chaparrito LCRS

From The Beat: Well, you were right.

Go Colts

I want the Indianapolis Colts win because Manning needs a ring because he is the best Q.B. in the league. They Q.B. sucks and throws too many inners.

-Lil' Choppa U2

From The Beat: Well, you got your wish, and so did Manning.

Super Bowl 2007

I think Chicago will win. I want Chicago to win because my family is rooting for Chicago, so I rooting for them also.

-Danny U2

From The Beat: Better luck next year!

I like the colors of the Bears so I'ma go with Chicago. But in another thing I think the Colts will win because Colt symbolizes the Horseshoe and that's lucky…

Life On The Outs

TBW (The Beat Within): Senor Cruz, why don't you talk to The Beat about your life on the outs? What do you do? How did you start coming to juvenile hall? Or why don't you talk about your young life back in Honduras? How did you come to the US? What was your childhood like in Tegucigalpa? Are you happy here? Do you miss Honduras? Do you ever go back and visit?
SC (Senor Cruz): Okay.
TBW: Where would you like to start?
SC: Why I'm coming to juvenile hall.
TBW: Okay. Go ahead and tell us—what happened that you came to juvy and then down to the (Log Cabin) Ranch?
SC: I started comin' to juvenile hall. They let me go to my house, then they take me back to juvenile Hall. They send me to my house again. Then I go to Log Cabin Ranch, then I run (from the Ranch,) then I come back here again. Right now I'm gonna get out in twelve more weeks. Then I have to take care of myself when I get out.
TBW: So you're not going to go live with your family?
SC: No. I want to come back to my block.
TBW: So your friends are like your family now?
SC: Yes. I just want to be a little soldier for life.
TBW: Where is your real family now?
SC: My family is in San Francisco.
TBW: You don't want to live with them when you're free again?
SC: Yeah, but it's not something important to me.
TBW: What about your brothers?
SC: I wanna help my brothers, but I cannot do nothing for them, because I ain't got no money.
TBW: Is there any way you can help your brothers besides giving them money? You're pretty independent, but you've talked about your brothers before. Do they need your help?
SC: I can just take care my brothers so nobody can touch them.
TBW: But that's a big help to them.
SC: Yeah, but I don't have no love for nobody.
TBW: Is that true?
SC: Yeah.
TBW: You don't love anyone, including your family?
SC: Yeah.
TBW: Unless we're getting into your personal business, can you tell The Beat why don't you love your family?
SC: Why don't I give them love? Because I don't feel like I got love from them when I needed it.
TBW: Like when you were a little boy?
SC: Yes.
TBW: What happened to you when you were a little boy?
SC: When I started to go to school and after school I start to go to the Mission to hang out with my friends, I started doing things I thought was good for me. I take my anger outside because I was doing things that is good for my blood. I gave my anger to my enemies. Like, you know, when you're angry and then you go fight with somebody you take off the anger and you feel good. But after a while, I started to get locked up. I tried to find the love from my family, but I can't find love because I feel like they is like it is too hard, because I never saw my family before. I don't feel normal when I call my mom "mom," because it's the first time I called her mom. I don't feel like I want to call her mom, because I don't feel comfortable. I don't want to call my dad "dad," because I don't feel comfortable.
My family tries to give me the best love they have, but I don't feel love and I never give love to my family. Then I start to feel angry to myself.
TBW: What happened with your family? Weren't you born in Honduras? Why don't you tell The Beat about your life as a baby and your childhood in Tegucigalpa?
SC: I was born in Honduras in '89, and then I was living with my mom for a couple months and then she left me in Honduras because she had to work here (in the USA.) So I was living in Honduras with my grandma. After three years, my mom came back to Honduras. I was living with my mom for one year and this time she brought me to my grandpa house with my brother and then I was four years old and I cried for my mom and my big brother told me my mom would be back (from the US) in two days and then I was waiting for my mom for fourteen years and I didn't see my mom for sixteen years.
TBW: Why didn't she come back for your brother and you sooner?
SC: She told me she had to work to get some money to buy me better things so everything was good for me, but I have everything, but I do not have love from my mom. And then, when I come up here to the US and I see my mom and all my family. I see my brother I never see before. When I came up here, I have no love from my family here. I feel uncomfortable in my house. I have two brothers, one auntie. I tried to get love, but I didn't get love.
TBW: Do your parents love you?
SC: I think so.
TBW: But it's not enough to help you? You don't trust their love?
SC: No, I don't trust. I don't know my family.
TBW: So your homies on your block are pretty much your family now?
SC: That's right. We're together.
TBW: You sound like you're pretty much on your own.
SC: Yeah.
TBW: Are you all right on your own on the outs?
SC: Yeah, I'm all right.

-Senor Cruz LCRS

From The Beat: Curious, is there anything your family can do to include you with them, so little by little you'll feel a part of them? What do you want from life? Do you want to struggle forever? The life you are leading is only going to get harder. What can you do to bring happiness to yourself and those who care for you? Write us and tell us your thoughts!

Crack On My Block

What it do Beat? Me chillin' doin' the same ol' shhh, different day. Ninja gettin' tired of this weak-ass shhh, but gotta go through it, feel me.

But man, my jets got hella crackhead out there tryna get a hit like it ain't no tomorrow. Then, when they get they hit, they start actin' hella stupid. Me and ma ninjas stay gettin' money, 'cause if you didn't know I'll rather get mo' dough. We go stay eatin' and sayin', "Forget these haters, man, hate it or love me and the thugs on top."

But it's ninjas out here just tryna make a livin' out here out of nothin', but if I ever hear of one of the homies on crack me and the other thugs go beat his ass on mamas.

-Al-Bundy U7

From The Beat: You know, Al, for a lot of those crackheads you see, there really ain't no tomorrow! When you say you and the homies about getting your money, does getting your money include selling that poison? If so, do you think you bear any responsibility for the picture you describe? Aren't those people who sell this stuff "tryna make a livin' out of nothin' just making more nothin' out of nothin'?And whether you and your boys are selling it or not (somebody is selling it...), do you see this as an individual problem, or a community problem — and by "community" we mean the whole city, state and country? Do you really think beating someone's ass for being addicted will change anything besides putting another bruise on someone's body? Can you think of any other responses to the problem that might be more effective?

Indianapolis In Super Bowl 2007

I hope Indianapolis win! This is my favorite team throughout the season. This team has my favorite quarterback and kicker. I really hope they win. This will be a close game

-Lil' J U6

From The Beat: You got your wish! What else do you hope for that can come true?

I Don't Want Any Breaks I Don't Deserve

What's up wit' The Beat? This Young Jeff, feel me? I'm up here, doin' the do, stayin' outta suckas faces, just doing me.

I'm writing about a break. Hell, naw, they ain't never gave me a break. I don't know why, but I don't want the police to give me a break. If I get caught, then I get caught. I then got breaks on lil' shhh that I shouldn't have deserved a break, but I did. I'm not sayin' if somebody I don't like, like the police, gave me a break, I wouldn't take it. I will take it.

-Young Jeff LCRS

From The Beat: You sound like you just want life to be fair, is that right, or are you very confused? We assume you take responsibility for whatever you do and don't want to have to answer to anybody or have to thank anyone for giving you anything you didn't deserve. Basically, you seem to want to be left alone, but then again, why do you allow yourself this type of misery?

Given A Break

One time my homie gave me a dub sac and I left it in my jacket pocket. I left it in my pocket for hecka long, so I forgot about it. Then one day I got caught up at my school for somethin' stupid and I was wearing that same jacket. The cops asked me if I had contraband and I didn't remember 'bout the sac, so I said no. Then he (the cop) found it and pulled it out and gave me the look, like, "What the hell is this?" I was like, "Damn, ain't that some shhh?"

So then they was bringing me to the halls and they stopped the car halfway there. One of the cops told me they wasn't gonna tell anyone 'bout the weed, so I guess they wanted to smoke it. That was one time the cops gave me a break.

-Chi-Frank LCRS

From The Beat: What a story. You lucked out too, yet you didn't take advantage of the opportunity, 'cause we suppose they knew in time you would get caught up again. What will it take to stay legit, stay free?

Standout

Love
When I used to think of you
My heart used to go into a race!!
But now when I think of you
My heart go into a slow pace!!
'Cause you broke it
And poked a hole in it
And now it hurts
So what should I do?
Let it go
Or go out the front door?
Or go find a new friend
To hold her hand?
Tell me, 'cause you were my love
For life

-Lil' V LCRS

From The Beat: Beautiful poem. You have such a romantic heart. Maybe, when you get out and are free again, you can go find this lady and see if she will have a good heart for you again.

Making The Best Of A Bad Situation

What it do, Beat? Feel me? We just up here in the conference room, laughing an' joking, tryna make the best out of a bad situation.

I'm just up here thuggin' it for real. I got four months left up in here. I been here for seven months. I would've been going home in a few, but I choose to be stupid and feel myself a lil' too hard. But, like I said, I'm makin' the best outta a bad situation, feel me? I'm progressing, 'bout ready to get out, fo' real, fo' real, but we up here, everybody up here, tryna do they program an' get back to the streets. We play basketball sometimes. We gone leave all this shhh on the streets.

-Young Jeff LCRS

From The Beat: Incarceration living, and it will only get a whole lot harder if you continue down such a path. Stay focused on doing your program and think outside the box! Think living a life totally free from drama. It can be done!

Same Song, Different Verse

Man, what sup with The Beat? This Lil' Junk. Most of y'all heard of me, but yeah, man, I'm back in this hole for a gun charge. Man, you know how that goes. A young ninja in the jetz making that money until the weak-ass nerds jumps out on me.

You know how that goes, a ninja had to take 'em on one. But they caught me with a gun. But yeah, I will be back in about seven months so yeah, you know how that goes. Lil' Junk go be back, so look out. Lil' Junk hated by many, feared by all.

-Lil' Junk U2

From The Beat: Yeah, we know how that go. Lil' Junk gonna be right back here or to places like this over and over again, because Lil' Junk has not made the connection that any thinking and responsible adult would make between going back to the same old thing and coming back to face the same old consequences. Yeah, we know how that go...

Given A Break

What's good with The Beat thang? This ya boy, Twon, coming from that Unit 3 status. Well, am about to put you up on game about this topic, right? Chea.

Well, one day I was downtown, doin' my thug thizzle with my goons, then my goon got off on this one ninja and then I put my gun down for my crown. Then the ninja that we smashed on started to chase my goon. Then the police scrap up and stop us. Then they ran our names. Then they told us to leave people alone. Then they let us go, but the whole hype was that I had a stay away order from the spot we was at.

-Twon U3

From The Beat: So, what are you trying to tell us with this? That you're smarter than the cops who let you go? That you could have paid a much bigger price by ignoring a stay away order? What should we conclude about someone who is given a huge break, but spits in the eye of those who gave him the break, and thinks it's cute? If you were older, we would say that what are acting a fool, and fools pay huge prices for their actions. But since you aren't older (which every word of this piece confirms), we'll just say that we hope you grow up before you go down.

Given A Break

Have you ever been given a break by the cops? Yes, I've been given chances a lot by cops, to the point where I got in here. I felt like it was over when the cops arrested me, and then given me chances. After a while I stop caring and doing my thang. Now that I look back on it, I wish I would've took each time the cops let me go I learned and never came here.

-Green U4

From The Beat: Wishing for things in the past to change will never change a single thing. Only learning from what you did in the past can make a difference in the future. When you say you wish you had taken advantage of the breaks you were given, what would you have done differently? What will you do differently in the future?

Crack And My Community

I think crack is a good and bad thing. In a bad way, you go to jail with it, and if you get caught with a lot of rock, they can get a lot of time. But in a good way, they can help people out and get money, so you can help your family out and it is just quick money.

-Jb Money U5

From The Beat: Let's look at your solution for getting money. Yes, you can get quick money by selling crack (as long as you don't get caught, which certainly you will sooner or later). But who's mother, sister, child, brother are you selling to? Whose life are you destroying in order to get rich? It feels good to have that money, but it's the worst to have your mother addicted to death. So, what kind of a balance is this? This is what's called a "Faustian Bargain" — selling your soul to the devil for a little cheese.

Crack And My Community

When I see people doing crack in my community, I see my community getting badder. Then it brings more people to do crack and some teenagers do crack. But sometimes I try to not pay attention to the people sellin' crack and people that do crack.

But I be seein' some of my friends sell crack and some of my friends' mom or they grandma or they auntie or they dad do. But I don't pay attention to none of that.

-Jt U2

From The Beat: We're glad you're not one of those teenagers whose life will get washed down the drain by crack, but why don't you want to pay attention? Does it just make you sad to see people doing damage to themselves and their families? What are you doing so that you won't have to spend any more time locked up?

The Beat Within Interviews Maleke

TBW: Maleke, how many times have you been here?
Leke: This my first time in here.
TBW: What do you plan on doing when you get released from here?
Leke: I plan on making better decisions and stop hanging out with them hot heads.
TBW: What do you mean when you said "hot heads"?
Leke: So when you hang with them hot boys, you be doing dumb stuff.
TBW: Would you need to change the things that you do on a day-to-day basis?
Leke: Yeah.

-Maleke U3

From The Beat: No more interviews, Maleke. Next time, you decide what you want to write, and put it down in your own words. We like the fact that you want to stay away from the boys that get in trouble. But tell us how you plan to do that? Words are easy. It's actions that are hard.

Give A Break

When I got a break, it was about a month after I got out of my group home. I was with two of my friends ridin' in a car. It wasn't stolen, but my friend didn't have his license and the police was behind us. We were smoking.

Then they pulled us over, asked my friend who car it was, then asked us if we had any guns or weapons on us or in the car. I told them no. I'm still on probation at this time with curfew, so when they asked for my name I gave them a alias.

They could've took all three of us but they only took my friend for driving with no license. They could've took my friend and I for smoking weed, but they just gave us a warning and told us to go home.

-Tabari U2

From The Beat: When you drive a car without a license and smoke something illegal at the same time you're still on probation, you're telling us as directly as anything that you are still living without a thought to consequences — which defines the way children think. Then, when we see that you got a break, but treated it like a joke and ended up back in the hall, you're begging us to ask: What will it take for you to grow up? You're paying a heavy price for continuing to think and act like a child, so when will that price be so heavy that it causes you to move to the next level? Any thoughts?

Super Bowl 2007

In the super bowl when they play on Sunday, I think the Chicago Bears are going to win the Super Bowl and I got money on the Bears. I think the Quarter Back going to throw hella touchdowns

-Dd U2

From The Beat: So tell us, how much money did you lose?

Super Bowl 2007

The Colts is going to win the Super Bowl because the Chicago Bears is weak and I like the Colts. The Colts is good because their Payton Manning has better Q.B. skills and their offense.

-Chilla U2

From The Beat: Well, you picked the winning team. Now can you pick the winning path to get out of here and stay out?

Given A Break

I was given a break January13, 2007, when I got caught in a stolo in da jets. Da narcs got on me, so I took dem around a couple of corners and da car ran out of gas. I hopped out and fell, and da rollers got me, took me to the station and let me go.

-Na Na U3

From The Beat: You were lucky. You stole a car and then tried to run, so the narcs knew they had a child in their hands and gave the child a break. When will the child realize that getting a break is an opportunity to make a change instead of an opportunity to keep acting the child?

Given A Break

One time, when I was chilling with my friends, loitering, my friends decided to tag at the house that we was loitering at. Then the owner came out and was calling the police on us, and the police came and pulled us over. And then, before that, I had got arrested. Later on the same police officer that arrested me, pulled us over, and out of the 20-35 people there, that police officer searched me and directly pointed me out, saying, "Jacky, you're on probation. Come here! I have to search you."

After a couple of hours, they let us go, because we weren't the ones that did it, and the people who did it already had left, so the police let us go. So that's what happened.

-Jacky U3

From The Beat: Did this experience make you think or act any differently, Jacky? It seems that you got a break, but didn't respect yourself enough to use it for your own advantage. After all, here you are...

Living

At this point of my life, I feel like I ain't ever changing around, 'cause I got my own way of living. This is the only way I know how to act. I don't see another existence. I have a perspective that sees a good life, but I can't cope with it.

As frustrating as it is, that's how I see life. I see it as everyone is doing good around me but me. I do not know how to fix my problems and get in a lifestyle that's good. I live in a good environment. I got good parents, but yet, I still have trouble in life. Coping with people is an example. If I can't get along with people, I can't do much with myself. I feel a little frustrated that people don't understand me. What can I do? Nothing.

-Alex U3

From The Beat: It seems to us that your biggest problem is that you pretend that there's nothing you can do to change your outlook or the outcome. That's just nonsense, a kind of cop out for an unwillingness to change. There are many, many people and programs out there (and even in here) dedicated to helping you "fix" your problems, but only if you want to fix them. That's the part we think you're not being honest about. You say people don't understand you and that you're frustrated, but there's nothing you can do about it. When there's nothing you can do about a problem, that means there's nothing you want to do about the problem. It's like someone who gets drunk every day but denies he's an alcoholic, and therefore never addresses the problem that is pulling him down more and more every day. Do you really want to "get in a lifestyle that's good?" If so, describe that lifestyle to us, and tell us how it's different from the lifestyle you've chosen. We know that if you want something, you can make it happen. What we don't know is whether you really want it to happen.

Given A Break

Give my a break? Well, yeah, the police gave me a break one time. Shhh, really I think God did ta keep it solid, 'cause it was like 12:00 somethin', and I was just drinkin' all day 'cause I was on my home pass, the first day at that.

I was drivin' in the 'hood, and I just looked to the left and the black-an'-whites was right there. I tried to turn down the beat, but I couldn't and I didn't wanna make it look like I was tryna tuck somethin', so I keep straight and they got right behind me. The beat was so loud I couldn't hear they sirens, but I just seen 'em they flashin' and that white light was on me.

But like I said, I was drunk so I put my hands up like I thought they said, but they didn't even say nothin'. Well if they did, I couldn't hear them, and my brother said, "Bra, put yo' hands down." When I got out they just put me in the cuffs, then I threw up ten times. But they still let me go. I really think that was God that did that.

-Dm U4

From The Beat: Let's get this straight. You were drinking all day on the first day of your home pass and driving drunk (putting everybody on the road in jeopardy, not to mention yourself and your brother), and you think God decided to do you a favor? We're interested in what you think God is or does, and whether you owe Him anything at all. Because when we read what you've written, it seems like you think God intervened to help you, and you paid Him back by doing whatever it is that got you locked up. In other words, you totally disrespected God's gift to you. If you don't have any respect for God, who do you respect?

Given A Break

I ain't never got a break from nobody, and I think that good on my behalf, because I got a hard life to live. I think I need to live a hard life, so I can be used to it when hard things come my way .

-Jb Money U5

From The Beat: Maybe if you didn't live such a hard life, those hard things wouldn't be coming so fast. Think about it.

I Was Foolish

What it do, Beat? Well, nothing much to say. I'm gonna go to the Ranch, at least that's what my PO said. He's 90% sure and 10% placement or group home or CYA. But, yeah, I got court Friday. I'll see what's gonna happen.

I hope I go to a group home. Being locked up is not cool. I've been here five times. I should have learned after the first time, but I was foolish. Once I get out, I will make a tremendous come back and get off probation.

-Lil' Eric U5

From The Beat: We admire your spirit to get off probation, Eric, but why will this time be different from all the others? If you've been here five times, we'll bet that every time you left, you promised you would never come back. So why should we believe you this time? Do you believe yourself? You've let yourself and your family down too many times. You owe them — and yourself — more than what you've been giving them. So, what will be different?

Life Through My Eyes

Life through my bloodshot eyes
would scare a square to death
Poverty, murder, violence
and never a moment to rest
Fun and games are never allowed
Some people are crazy and some people are wild
Everybody knows how I get down
So give me everything before I lay that ass down!

-Lil Aj U6

From The Beat: By "getting down" the way you do, you are allowing "them" to take everything from you — your love, your family, your freedom. The only one who can give you anything is you, but you seem all too willing to give them everything. We just don't get it...

Given A Break

One night I was on my way to da crib, and the police pulled me over and ran my name in the computer. I didn't have a record but they found some weed on me and they gave me a warning and they let me go.

-Young Majic U4

From The Beat: You obviously didn't value this break as much as you should have, or you wouldn't be here. How many breaks do you think you have coming before you take it all seriously?

Knock It Out

"What's The Word Bird?" Dis DM. I'm 17. I'ma be 18 in May and they tryna send me ta another group home. They gave me a right to release but ain't no group home messin' with me. But I'ma do it if they send me to one. So I'm just sayin' if y'all gotta go ta a group home just knock it out.

-Dm U4

From The Beat: Don't just "knock out" time, D. Use it to your advantage. Learn what they are teaching. Read on your own to learn what they are not teaching. Think about what you want in your future and how you can get there from here without putting yourself behind locked doors. Time moves forward whether you do or not, so take advantage of it, which means do more than just "knock it out."

Given A Break

I remember when I've been given a break by the police, when I was throwing rocks at cars while I was on probation. When I threw the rock at the car, he (the driver) called the police on me. Then the police came and asked me what my name was, and I said, "Gregory." Then he looked up my name in the computer and asked me, am I on probation? And I said, "Yes."

Then he said, "Ok, I'm going to give you a break this time, but if I get another call because you're throwing rocks at cars, I'm going to arrest you and take you in." I felt surprised when I heard the officer say that he's givin' me a break. I also went back and did the same thing, but didn't get caught that time.

-Gregory U5

From The Beat: To be honest, it makes us very angry when we read what you did, Gregory. First, it tells us that you're a child, and children should not throw rocks. When you're throwing rocks at moving cars, you're announcing to the world that you're still a child! People have been killed by just such childish foolishness, and we have loved ones driving on those roads. If you had killed one of our family by acting so stupidly, it would be hard for us to forgive you. If you had killed one of your own loved ones, it would be hard for you to forgive yourself! But then, to get a break and go back to acting as stupidly as you had before, well, we have no words except these: we hope what you're experiencing now will give you a boost out of your childhood and into young adulthood. That needs to happen, and it needs to happen soon!

Second Chance

I was wondering what life would be like when the judge said, "Stephen, I'm willing to give you a second chance, a second chance at life."

Today, January 23, 2007, all that came to life. I'm not going to YA or the Ranch I'm going to Philly.

-Young Kristina U7

From The Beat: We hope you take this as a true second chance, and use it to learn all you can. Now the judge is wondering what it will be like when you come back and say, "Judge, my days of letting the system decide my fate are over. I am now in control of my own life!"

Super Bowl, 2007

I want Indianapolis to win, because they haven't won a Super Bowl in a long time. Plus, my little nephew lives in Indianapolis, so he can see the game on TV and tell me what happened in the game and who won.

-Octavio U3

From The Beat: Well, you got your wish. What else do you wish for? Maybe it will come true also.

Super Bowl

The Super Bowl... that's a hard decision. I think Chicago's going to win. That's all I got to say.

-Lil' Kut U5

From The Beat: Oops! That's all we got to say!

Crack In My Community

I think if they didn't have crack, I think it will be coo' and better because it won't be that much violence and stuff like that. But where I'm from, it's crack everywhere. It ain't never going to stop. But it will be coo', 'cause then police probably really won't mess with us and stuff like that. But now it's there, it ain't goin' to change. I'd be surprised if they did. That all I got to say.

-Lil' Kut U5

From The Beat: Well, if there will always be crack in your community, how do you avoid using it or selling it? Or do you avoid it? If it isn't drugs, what do you have to change about the way you live your life so that you won't have to spend any more time behind walls?

Why I Bang

I bang 'cause da 'hood in ma veins
I'ma stay dipped. Ain't shhh go change
When I hit da streets at night I
It's a must I have a thang
I cain't slip and let a sucka
Take my life and feel no pain
I post up on da block
Like a light pole hotter then flames
With that dope boi magic
Doin' ma thang
By da time copped me
Some duces on a stang
But tryna keep me locked down
'Cause I'm wild and untamed

-Lil' Scari U6

From The Beat: We are as certain that things will change, as you are certain that they will not. Both of us cannot be right about our certainties, but ours are based on years longer than you've been alive, reading other young gangsters who have written (and believed) exactly what you now believe, only to have reality force changes in their lives! (Pay attention to The Beat Without, and you can meet some of those we are talking about.) We cannot move time forward to make you see the inevitable future, because you are not ready to accept that reality. But we can tell you that time does move forward, whether you wish it to or not, and that it brings changes in everyone's lives, yours and ours. The question is not whether you will change or not (you will); the question is only whether you will allow those changes to be imposed on you by those who have the power to keep you their slave (as you should have realized by now through what you're experiencing right this minute), or whether you will move from irresponsible childhood to more responsible young adulthood, and bring about the changes yourself. We know what we are hoping for. What are you hoping for?

Super Bowl 2007

The think Indianapolis gone win and make us enjoy their game.

-JB Money U5

From The Beat: You're right about that.

Block Monsters Go Hard

Block monsters run the streets
About all of them carry heats
None of them have the heart to communicate with The Beat
Most of us monsters do what we do
Go to your house and bust at you

-Nick Beam U6

From The Beat: Monsters stand, monsters fall/Look around, they fill the hall/Monsters bleed, monsters tell/Monsters fill our prison cells/Here is the price those monsters pay/ Crying to God on Judgment Day.

Never Given A Brea

I really don't got nothin' to say about this topic because I never really got a break from the boys. I never got off with a warning or they never let me go. That's the reason I'm in here.

-Young Meel U7

From The Beat: We know you can write more than this, even if writing is difficult for you. If you've never been given a break, then why pick this topic? We give you three topics (plus the option to write on the topic of your own choosing), so there's no reason (other than laziness or fear of writing) to pick the one topic about which you "got nothin' to say." Feel us?

Crack In My Community

Crack in my community cause me to spend another Birthday in here. Yeah, I make plenty money but I see most of ma ninjas on it on da under smoking dat shhh with weed, and I ain't had no problem sellin' it to dem.

When I was younger, they put me on asking me, "Bra, let me get a double up," knowing damn well dey gonna smoke it. Crack in my community neva gonna stop, but...

-C-Money U7

From The Beat: So you don't have any problem selling this poison, but here you are doing what you're told. Sounds like a problem to us. Crack didn't cause you to spend another birthday in here. You caused yourself to spend another birthday in here. How many birthdays are you ready to throw away before you realize your life is thrown away?

Shining In The Bay

When I was about fifteen, I figured out
What the game's truly 'bout
Never sold nickels or dimes
But sold a quarter once in couple years time
And look at a ninja... I still shine
Say the Bay sound so good
The day is gifted when you hear this

-Young G U6

From The Beat: We don't think you had a chance to finish this, but from the way you started, we think you need a few more years to finish maturing. You may think you figured it all out, but we'd bet money that what you think you know now won't be the same as what you know five years from now. You still think you're shining? It's hard to see that shine under the fluorescent lights and stale air where you're forced to be right now...

Baby Pen

What up with The Beat Within? This is your boy D-Boy? Me? I am just lookin' at the four walls. This new J.T.C. it is no cool. It is the baby pen. The staff be acting funny.

-D-Boy U7

From The Beat: Come on, D-Boy. You can do so much better than this. What does this tell a reader? The JTC is not cool. Duh! How is it "not cool"? How is like a "baby pen"? How is the staff "acting funny"? Like we always say, what makes a Beat piece are the details.

The System's Not That Smart

I have been given a few breaks by cops when they pulled me over and they found cans and markers on me. They usually just let us go, and the reason is because they have bigger crimes to catch who have done worse things.

But the trip is that they almost always write down our names. I think they do this so when it all goes on record they calculate shhh and are able to figure out that if they start wrappin' people up for the little dumb shhh, they will be able to fill this new juvenile hall up quick!

Hella people are starting to get wrapped too. I've been noticing and people have been tellin' me the system isn't really all that smart. We just ignorant off this shhh. All they do is study statistics and figure out how to make money off shhh.

-Meen U6

From The Beat: Well, if the system can "study statistics" and learn how to make money off of them, then how does that make them "not that smart"? Isn't that what most of the people locked up try to do, make money off whatever they can. If "the system isn't really all that smart," then what does that tell you about those who get caught up in it? How smart could they be? What would a "smart" system look like to you? Our advice to you, Meen, is to forget about whether the system is smart or not, and keep working on making yourself as smart as possible.

Given A Break

I take out my parents' and brother's car occasionally to joyride or to go places. I take it without their permission. I got pulled over two times, but they always let me go. I do not have my driver's license yet, but my friends taught me how to drive.

When I got pulled over, they asked for my license and registration and I told them the truth. They decided not to write me up and told me to drive home safely.

After about five times, I told my brother and he was furious. I explained to him that I had places to go so he was calm after twenty minutes.

-Lil' J U6

From The Beat: You're risking more than you know by this foolishness, Lil' J. First, if one of those cops decides to write you up, that becomes a permanent mark on your driving record, which increases the cost of your insurance as well as making it more difficult to get a license. But more important, if you were to have an accident (even if it isn't your fault), the owner of the car is liable for damages and can pay big consequences that you haven't even considered. We note that you told your brother, but not your parents. Don't you think you owe them a little more respect than this?

Caught But Not Arrested

The cops gave me a break before. But it was the only good thing I seen them do. But when I was with peoples, they came up and one of us had drugs on us. They searched and found us, but they didn't arrest us.

-Icy U7

From The Beat: You don't sound very grateful for this break, Icy. You complain that it was "the only good thing" you've seen them do, but have you played out the possible consequences to you if they hadn't done this "only good thing?" You not only don't give them much gratitude, you also seem to have taken the good deed as a joke, and here you are again... When are you going to start thinking?

Super Bowl

I think Chicago Bears are gonna win the Super Bowl, and I hope they do, because that's my second favorite team after the 49ers. They earned it and they're gonna whip the hell out of the Colt's ass.

The Colts shouldn't even have won. They barely won against the Patriots. They only won 'cause the Patriots threw an interception. So that's who I think will win the Super Bowl.

-Jokes U6

From The Beat: Which is why predicting the future is such a risky thing to do... Better luck next time.

The Beat Is Undercover

Dear Beat Within,

You guys is pretty cool, but you guys ain't just there yet. I don't know why I write stuff, 'cause you guys take words out. You guys get people in trouble with this Beat.

My boy wrote a piece, then his PO told him, "Thank you for admitting to your crime on The Beat". You guys is funny. I think you guys work with the 5-0 boys, the POs, GTF. Anyways, you folks is sneaky. All right you guys is the police. You guys is undercovers.

-Chicano U6

From The Beat: We're sorry you feel this way, Chicano. Of course we don't work with the police, the GTF, the feds, or anyone trying to put you away. (Most of the staff at The Beat has been where you are...) If you feel that we are shills for the system, then you shouldn't be writing anything that might get you in more trouble. Yes, we do take words out of some of the pieces we publish for two reasons. The first is that some words are just not acceptable in this magazine because they are offensive to some people — hate words — and so we don't let anyone use them. But the second reason is precisely because we don't want to print anything that will get our writers in more trouble. If your boy got busted by his PO for something we published in The Beat, then we fell down on the job, and that's our bad. (We would like to know the details of this, if your friend would care to tell us about them, so we can take extra care in the future to prevent this from happening.) We think it's very shady for the PO to use the words you share with us here in the Beat against you because trust is all we have. With this information, we will try even harder to make sure nothing gets published that someone in the system can use to punish you even more.

Super Bowl 2007

I can't wait until the Super Bowl because there is going to be hella food from counselors. The Super Bowl is going to be a really good game because both teams are very good team. I am going for the Bears.

-Kwes U6

From The Beat: Well, even though your team didn't win, if you got some of that food the counselors provided, you did win!

Super Bowl 2007

I would want the Bears to win 'cause me and my team are bears.

-Jason U6

From The Beat: Sorry... You can't win 'em all. Better luck next year.

Given A Break

When someone gives me a break, it's just like saying I have more time to spend in the 'hood. I mean I had narcs let me go when I was slipping with a pocket full of rocks, and all he said was that he's looking for the heat. When shhh like that happens, that's when I know that my RIP homeboys are watching my back for real.

-Twenty-First Century U2

From The Beat: So you believe that your dead homies have your back, and that's why you get away with shhh? Well, apparently they didn't have the same advantage, since they are now RIP! Think about it!

Sad

Sad and lovely, hurt and weak
Behind these walls, a place I don't want to be
I confess my problems to no one's ears
As I try and hide my silent tears
I'm in PSK, tryin' to get my life together

-Terri

From The Beat: If you are sincerely trying to get your life together (and we believe you are), that's all any of us can every try to do. No one's life is perfect, but there is no chemical (drug or alcohol) that ever made life anything but worse. Just keep trying, one day at a time! If you do, you won't be sad for long.

Forgetful

-Lil' K

From The Beat: There is not one word of what you wrote that's worth publishing in this magazine. You clearly have no respect for females, which means you clearly have no respect for yourself, and that may be the root of your problems. We can't control whether you respect yourself or others who are in this program with you, but we can control your disrespect for us, and we won't permit it! If you want to write trash, find a bathroom wall to deface. Don't deface these pages that we offer to you as a resource to teach and learn, not to hate!

I Hate Listening To Rules

I've had too many chances, because I've been to juvenile hall four times. The last time I got locked up, I got sent here. But every other time I got locked up, I told the judge I'ma change and to, "Please give me one more chance," and he did. And every time I got out, I hit up my friends and got high as hell.

But now I'm here and I'm tryin' to do better, but it's hard, 'cause I hate listening to rules, so I'm strugglin' a lot.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: Most all of us hate listening to rules, Jasmine. But you are faced with this choice: you either listen to the rules you have to live by in Walden House, or you will almost certainly be forced to listen to rules by guards who don't really have your welfare at heart. Part of growing up is knowing when we have to do things we don't like today in order to be able to have the life we want tomorrow.

I've Been Through A Lot

OK, just yesterday I was going through so much shhh and I wanted to let everybody know that I can handle my own. But I did. I had took care of what I had to do to help the family and not go off. And I don't want to do anything that I can regret and not go home. So there you go. The end.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: You didn't give us any details about what you had to do to help the family, so we can't comment on that, except to say we are reassured when you write that you don't want to do anything that will prevent you from going home and truly helping your family by being there with them. Which, by the way, will also help you!

Super Bowl '07

Oh, man, I got $20 on the Cubs. They're coming up this year! I heard they have a good quarterback... I wanna see, though.

-Crack Head

From The Beat: If you heard the Cubs have a good quarterback, someone is feeding you a line. The Cubs are a baseball team, and they aren't playing in the Super Bowl. Did you mean the Bears? If so, you lost $20!

Crack got me money, crack got me locked up.

A Break

Man, I got ova on my chances... I had a whole lot an' I kept playin' around... I mean, on the streets... with my parents...with tha system. Next thing you know, I'm stuck in here!

-Maria

From The Beat: Yeah, you're stuck in here writing tiny little pieces for The Beat that have almost no explanations, no details, and reveal little more than you like getting away with the least amount of work you can...

Chicago Vs. Indianapolis

I don't care who wins. I just like they butts. LOL.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: We're sure they'll be happy to know...

Lies

Lies are the only thing
That comes out of your mouth.
Lies are the only thing
That anybody hears
Lies, lies
Why so many lies?
Lies are the first thing
That I heard
Lies is why
You still are out of jail
Lies is why
You are still in this world.

-Marie

From The Beat: This isn't really Beat material, Marie. What can we learn from it? Only that somebody you know is a liar. What would be a good Beat piece is talking about the effects of lies on your life, on the life of those you know, why people tell lies, etc. What you've written here would be better put into an envelop with a 39 cent stamp, addressed to whoever you're talking about, and dropped in a mailbox. The Beat is NOT a mailbox!

No Title

-Pomo

From The Beat: We don't know if you wrote any of the six poems you handed in as your own, but we know for sure you didn't write all of them, and that is cheating yourself. (Plagiarism is not permitted in The Beat.) For example, we know the song "I Remember You" was written by Johnny Mercer (our father's favorite composer) more than 70 years ago! We're interested in what you have to say, not what he had to say!

Never Gonna Change

Change? For what? For you? Hell, no! From the top and the bottom of my heart, I am the same person that I always will be!

-Speedy

From The Beat: We have two words to respond to you're "never gonna change" mentality, but we can't print those two words in The Beat. We will tell you, though, that the first word starts with a B and the second word starts with an S. The question is not whether you will change, because that is a certainty for all of us, not just you. The only question is whether you will be the director of the changes, or allow others to force those changes on you. Your choice.

Crack And My Community

Who would I be without crack? I would not be Crack Head...I'd just be Crazy Head or something... I wouldn't have an example nickname... Crack got me money, crack got me locked up. But it contributed to my life.

It's always been around. I remember seeing it sold outside my house.

-Crack Head

From The Beat: And again, Crack Head, we have the same comment we've been making for weeks. Where is the information that someone can learn from your experiences? For example, you say crack has contributed to your life, but except for giving you a nickname (and not a very pretty one at that), what is the contribution it's made in your life? If you give the minimum effort, you will get the minimum benefit. But apparently, that doesn't mean a lot to you. Are we right? Tell us why, but not in twenty-five words or less...

RIP To BB

Lately, I've been thinking about you. I love you and you will always be remembered. The other day I drew a mural for you. It was a picture of you and me and my baby boy. Well, you are remembered and never forget me. You are my guardian angel.

-Speedy

From The Beat: With the attitude you pretend to have, you are definitely in need of a guardian angel. We hope that BB is better at being your guardian angel than he was for himself...

SANTA CRUZ

The Beat Within

Stuck

I should have minded my parents
instead of smoking the weed,
joking with the homies,
living on the edge.
Now I'm stuck in here,
with nothing but pride.

-Big Dub

From The Beat: Not quite. You also have pencil and paper and you write really well. Maybe it took this for you to discover your talents.

Super Bowl

I don't really care who wins. It can be Chicago or Indianapolis. I don't care, but I will watch the game to see.

-Julian

From The Beat: Well it's over, what id you do? Did you watch it?

RYAN EURICH ***We don't normally enjoy too many love poems because we know there usually documents that reflect being alone incarcerated and horny. However, it's a relief to hear love poems that actually have meaning other than being horny. When they come straight from the heart, they say so much more. He writes a couple more pieces without being on the topic of love. One is about addiction and the other is about going insane. He's a great writer and we know you'll feel the same. He's writing from a California State Prison in San Diego, CA.***

Soulmates

My poetry depends on me, to write
The words and set them free;
Expressing what I need to be,
So I can stop to sit and breathe;
My life is upside down you see, I
Got it all in my small family;
A beautiful husband and our new baby
Wandering our days momentarily;
Together always us three will be,
Our soul's connection has made us complete
Our compassion and tolerance will
bind us tightly
We're in the light and still can't see
How our whole situation is so
Meant to be.
Soulmates and Best Friends for
Eternity.

-Anjul Rivara
(Ryan's fiancé)

Insanity

Is he crazy or is he mad,
There's a difference see it's kind of sad
The screams that echo from a prison cell,
Brings forth the reality of a man made hell.
Sentenced to prison as a teenage kid
Started his life on a downward skid,
But still he stands tall like and old oak tree,
Head held high for the world to see.
Although it's true, his freedom they take,
His mind won't surrender
And his spirit won't break.
Look at him people he's your own creation
The perfect picture of total damnation.
So if this is justice then let it be done,
I just hope this never happens to
Your daughter or son.

Angel Dear:

I had a dream not long ago
Of a tormented Angel and her spiritual role.
She had long black hair, skin that was fair,
And a white satin tunic over her whole body she'd wear.
Her wings were still white yet they were tattered and worn,
And she said she missed the sound of Gabriel's horn.
I asked of her name this most beautiful doe,
Lust was her name and deception her role.
I asked her, what of our meeting this day
And as she told me a tear down her cheek rolled away
She said "You're headed this way faster than you know
And I don't want our next meeting to be below."
When I awoke in a sweat
Lying next to me was the face of that angel I met in my dream.

Roger Raccoon And His Recon Squad:

Roger Raccoon and his recon squad
Dumb masked bandits and their messed up job.
Paranoid destroyers of the feeble mind.
They seem to come out as you peek through your blinds.
There's Marcus, there's Allan, there's John, and there's Pete,
But of course we have Roger and they're all packing heat.
See Roger's the leader who started this crew,
Trained are these killers who escaped from the zoo.
They run taunting and planning attacks,
They seem to come out after getting your sack,
They get more vicious after every puff of the pipe
A loss of decisions, every type, they seem to come out only at night. Only their shadows we seem to sight.
So in conclusion I'd like to add,
If you see them too, I'll see you in rehab.

The Reaper:

I come through the night secretly
Blown in by the wind all demons now enslaved by me,
They ask me for trigger on the lives that they wither
And they trip on the blank stare in my eyes.
Casper that's me, but the job titles Grim Reap
And it's time to cause mutiny,
The death we deliver makes innocents quiver and rot for eternity.
So beware earthly children
And rise and watch for who creeps in the night,
For you have never seen such disastrous things
As I am about to bring with my own demons of suffering fright. Warlocks and ghouls those demonish fools.
My number one guru
My henchmen of sorts,
Addiction his name and depression he courts,
The advancement of violence the drinking if Gin,
Needles stuck into the veins over and over again,
My job is at ease you do it for me
And I sit back and grin from the start,
Thanks to you world for taking part
In your own destruction and your negative chart,
Peace be to you now! CHUCK IT!
No peace for you, your mind was as weak as your heart.
So lay down your weapons don't try to fight,
For this breed has never been seen, tuck your children in tight
And leave on their lights
'Cause I do my best work as I fly by the night.

Really, Is This A Riddle Or A Rhyme?

It's a paradox it's a paradigm and I'm opening up Pandora's Box

I'm perplexed, being a sandbag in the system talking about penal codes, probation, and the police to reach your potential

Wait, what is the mission again, should I protest, act like MLK, stop eating like Gandhi, wave an AK47?

In a short period of time you said in front of everyone, "I feel as though I've known her my whole lifetime" its wonderful, but not possible for you must have been lonely for so many reasons

They asked me how does this make you feel. ...I "feel" awfully pudgy and yet totally comfortable with you, a bit of German punk, cause you want proof, for me to show you love and compassion, just a little bit of paradise

Its obvious what you need are parents, but the prospects are slim, so lets talk placement and put you in a holy hell reckless rule house

As strange as it seems, listen to your music with lyrics about bitches, and take pleasure that despite your taste in music; you are praise worthy

Preventative measures will guarantee probabilities, and I'm not popular because I do not like that pretense, you deserve a piece of the pie and to be taken care of properly

You need to take responsibility, its relative I've told you, come on Prince Charming, you got a lot of personality and in your smile there is no denial

No! You can't get plastered or smoke pot, I know there's a lot to fill, but you might get killed

You can be polite, study plasmasomes, prove 'em wrong, don't be a pip squeak, demonstrate the expected progress this will get you a passport and on a plane at age eighteen

Pleading with me, "is there an end," I'm sorry I don't set policy, you see, I'm not a M.D. and I don't have a PhD or a JD

Really, is this a riddle or a rhyme?

What's the psychology, should I suggest you see a physician to prescribe a pharmaceutical to rid you of your post traumatic stress syndrome, yeah swallow a pill - that's a life plan

This takes practice listening to pontificating people caught up in the politics and their positions, and I wonder what's up with their pain?

Hey you want some cotton candy pink and blue to match my eyes cause they've been crying over you even though it's not the issue, just a matter of fact

I'm stuttering and my pronunciation sucks, because I'm stuck, I just wanna scream a lot of profanity, why is it you scare, and then dare me to care?

Now, I'm pissed off, but not paralyzed, watching you get pushed around, and I'm told this is a double edge sword although there's blood on all our hands

My position is not all smug; tough love, good luck; here's a buck; you can phone me while you do your prison time

I hope that our essence will not dilute as dreams often do

In this riddle or is it a rhyme?

A. SMITH ***There are angels that carry blessings around us all the time, it's just that it's rare they do something to show their faces without feeling like their revealing too much. This next angel met a 'youth' through Child Advocates and we guess befriended him and his situation. She followed him all the way through his incarceration in juvenile hall and even wrote a poem we're assuming was inspired by him. She also donated money to The Beat, which we will put to good use. Talk about having a gigantic heart. She's really dedicated to making a change, which makes us grateful that we are too. She's writing from her home, south of San Francisco.***

Dear Beat

Please find enclosed a check for $XXX.XX as a donation to The Beat Within. What an excellent venue for youth to express their feelings and more!

My world was literally turned upside down by a youth I met through Child Advocates. It changed me. What I saw he endured in group homes and in the system was appalling and disheartening. What was weird was he was constantly told me how lucky he was to have me, but I thought it was wonderful, nothing lucky happened to him. He taught me more about me, my strengths and weaknesses than anyone ever has.

What love and compassion I showed him - I know he felt and believe we'll probably be friends for a long time. (My husband was his CASA as well)

Now, he'll probably go to juvenile hall, and its sad because he had so much potential.

He gave me his poem book that he wrote as a sophomore. I hope he will find The Beat Within or The Beat Within will find him because he has a very powerful voice, a keen perception, and profoundly poetic in the way he speaks and writes.

Thank you for having The Beat Within available. I found solace in reading the various poems, even though its tough reading. I finally was able to find some relief in writing my thoughts, in what I guess is called a poem - more venting on my part, its enclosed for your review; to toss or share.

CARLOS JARMON

We are very honored to welcome to our pages Carlos Jarmon. Carlos steps up huge, proclaiming he is not much of a writer, yeah right, as he highly recommends for all of us readers to see the documentary film, "Rize." After reading his piece we hope you do your part to get the film onto your unit, or ask us Beat readers to bring it onto the unit. This film sounds like a winner, and obviously it touched Carlos so much he picked up a pencil and did his part in sharing the film with us thousands of readers. Thank you Carlos! We do hope to hear form you again. We'd love to hear from you about your life growing up and how you became the hardened gangster in prison. Teach us Carlos, teach! Carlos writes us from New Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. ON a final note, we added from the "Movieweb" website this short review of this 2005 documentary... "'Rize' reveals a groundbreaking dance phenomenon that's exploding on the streets of South Central, Los Angeles. Taking advantage of unprecedented access, this documentary film brings to first light a revolutionary form of artistic expression borne from oppression. The aggressive and visually stunning dance modernizes moves indigenous to African tribal rituals and features mind-blowing, athletic movement sped up to impossible speeds. "Rize" tracks the fascinating evolution of the dance: we meet Tommy Johnson (Tommy the Clown), who first created the style as a response to the 1992 Rodney King riots and named it "Clowning", as well as the kids who developed the movement into what they now call Krumping. The kids use dance as an alternative to gangs and hustling: they form their own troupes and paint their faces like warriors, meeting to outperform rival gangs of dancers or just to hone their skills. For the dancers, Krumping becomes a way of life - and, because it's authentic expression (in complete opposition to the bling-bling hip-hop culture), the dance becomes a vital part of who they are.

Like "Paris is Burning" or "Style Wars" before it, "Rize" illuminates an entire community by focusing on an artform as a movement that the disenfranchised have created. But the true stars of the film are the dancers themselves: surrounded by drug addiction, gang activity, and impoverishment, they have managed to somehow rise above. The film offers an intimate, completely fresh portrayal of kids in South Central as they reveal their spirit and creativity. These kids have created art - and often family - where before there was none."

First and worst, at young age, evade his suicide I did neglect.
Eddie told me of his choice, help him not I chose to select.

Rize!

Hello,

I'm not one for writing but I feel duty bound to relay this important life saving info for the youngsters.

I just seen a movie that has the potential to put serious thoughts into young minds. The movie is an extremely thought provoking documentary of young teens in the most notorious war zones of Los Angeles who don't want to be a gangster, drug dealer, crackhead, or hooker.

This film reflects these kids self-produced positive alternative to all the negative drama through a unique dance groups.

I strongly recommend you check it out to share with the kids, I sincerely feel it will touch then in a positive way and show them the possibility of a different path.

The young adults and kids are the focus of the movie sharing their stories, hopes, dreams and the opportunity in life, regardless of the situation or circumstances. Young folks should be given the chance to see this film and I feel it should be an obligation to those who care about those kids to see if they see it. You'll do them a disservice not to share it with them.

I been in and out all my life and will never get out, a hard core gang member, but this film moved me emotionally. This film is a gift and they'll enjoy it, learning from it and much more, its called "Rize," check the net, it's really worth your time to find it. I don't have much but I'll hustle the funds to get this film for you if necessary.

Young people need to see this documentary, it shows that even in a war zone there's a different path, that you don't have to live a life of negative. I can't say enough about this film and it was my responsibility to share this to whoever seeks to save young lives. Now its up to you, I did my part. Rize!

Greg Ledbetter

The Beat Within gets around! This week we finally welcome to our pages poet, Greg Ledbetter who writes us from the Waupun Correctional facility in Waupun Wisconsin. We do not know too much about Greg, but we honored for what he shares this week. We definitely look forward to reading more of his fabulous poetry, and we do hope that by the time he gets back to us he has been moved from the max prison to a medium security prison.

Dear Error! Contact not defined.
You just sent me a recent Beat issue and I read it from front to back. I really enjoyed it! I would love to receive more volumes.

This is my first time in prison and my last. I am trying to learn the system.

I love writing and would like to submit some of my work. To have my work in print would be a great honor.

I have enclosed a poem I have written. It is titled "As Time Goes By," and it's the first piece I wrote after being incarcerated. Although there are parts of the poem that seem down I like to think as a whole the work is about hanging in and not giving up.

I would really love to get my work constructively critiqued. Any feedback you could give me would be appreciated.

I am currently at a maximum security prison in (the state of) Wisconsin. I am trying to make good use of my time and be a model inmate to get to a medium security prison.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

As Time Goes By

Upon a bunk as I lay, time ebbs by throughout the day
While dozing in and out of sleep, most dreams my mind does forget.
With thoughts of rest shrinking, notions of the past invade my thinking.
A blue heart I have wandering, pondering not to be upset.
"my life is a ship," I say, "sinking under a deep inlet!"
Reflecting fills me with regret

Grey skies above us all, with the summer's change into fall,
The light and comfort of each day, shortening with each sunset.
Locked away alone in a cage for the poor choices I have made.
First and worst, at young age, evade his suicide I did neglect.
Eddie told me of his choice, help him not I chose to select.
Guilt carried is a heavy debt.

Many years have come and gone, doing the best to move on.
More decisions, poor decisions trapping my life in a net.
Relations with those who were green did much damage
I did not mean
A house of cards built with a teen, lean and collapse is a sure bet.
"no malice in this heart," I cry, "no harm meant you will detect!"
By this time fate for me is set.

The future seems so bleak often release from life I seek.
Pleading guilty to pride, lust and greed much time I did collect
One hundred years not much some rage,
others felt the hate displayed.
Printed across the front page, parade the monster people expect.
Remorse consuming, freedom ever looming I suspect.
For my eyes shall always be wet.

In life there is no magic and this tale might seem tragic,
But mine has only half begun and not done I would inject.
With each day of living there is hope for them to before giving.
This storm I am weathering bettering there is a future yet.
"atonement and change, " I avow, " 'till I am never a threat!"
Face it all and take it direct.

Love

What if there was a way to change the world to change your thoughts
I am giving it every thing I got
my love for you is all I got
it won't change you
could hate it girl
'cause I can't give you all this material stuff but only my love would last forever.
It would never perish,
I put smiles on your face
I brought happiness to your world
but you left me all alone in the cold,
dark was my life
It didn't spark you
see me in the eyes was no light
only hope
'cause I know that you know t
his love would last forever
no one would treat you the way I treat you and love you the way I love you.
Baby let me be the one to love you,
to please you,
hold you and never to look back.
I'll be there when you need me.
I knew since the first day I saw you t
here was no doubt in my mind that you were the one for my life.
I guess I was blessed with one wish
which it was the same day that I met you
it was your smile
it was your eyes
that's what you said
but I seen something more special
that It was your heart, personality and soul
you care for the ones.
They didn't have what you got and that's love and happiness.
You have it in me.
So thank the man up above for bringing us together
baby girl and you're my love,
love, and love...

JAVIER BONILLA

Writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, we give you someone who obviously has a thing for the ladies. So much to the point that we're assuming it's got him in some trouble. It's one thing to have a desire for a woman but it's another to make that the focal point of one's existence. Sure, for a straight man, nothing can compare to the soft elegance of a woman. However, there are many women in the world and when we solely focus on that we'll receive a whole spectrum of 'takers.' But when we do for self find a woman who's on a similar path as us that we're attracted to that's where the real magic comes into play. We're not saying people should wait for a woman to fall in their laps, but we're also not saying we should go chasing them at all hours of the day. Just our opinion... to each its own...

Women

Could it be anybodies fault the women are beautiful (hot), (attractive), (sexy) I can't help it to look and admire her (skin) her (beauty), (face), (eyes), (lips), (ass) I lust I won't lie its just a thing inside of me. I wish I could give to all women, (pleasure), (love), (satisfaction), (happiness) and more, more... I'm not touching them just looking and if there's a punishment for just looking, punish my (eyes) but not my heart and mind 'cause my love for a woman is always going to last...

Woman

It's unexplained understandable about the beauty of a woman, her attraction, beauty, smile, eyes, lips, her butt, legs, hair, everything about her seems to be sexy. Hot pleasurable it's something a wee man should appreciate is this beautiful thing call woman

Feeling weak and lonely
they trying to take away my strength
to succeed in life
but one true thing is I'm fighting
this battle day by day.

Just Another Human Being

I wish I could tell her how much I admire her beauty, smile.
Tell her how much that I like her.
But it seems like I'm chained bounded deprive from expression
feeling lonely toward a woman.
Sometimes I wonder if I deserve to live this is justice life.
I wonder how would she react, how would she look at me.
Would she look at me in a bad way or good way?
Would she judge me because of my circumstances or would she accept me for who I am. Just another human being looking for love....

Life

I'm sitting in this small cell with another (human being)
that's how the government wants it to be.
Feeling weak and lonely
they trying to take away my strength to succeed in life
but one true thing is I'm fighting this battle day by day.
(Striving) (Staying strong) trying to think clear.
Obstacles are always there but always turn left and keep pushing
but so be it that won't stumble upon defeat...

My Poem

Them say I'm a criminal!
Them say I'm a convict!
Them say I'm a prisoner!
And don't deserve anything
Better in life no chances to succeed but to get old
And to die in this cell
They judge me like they
Know me, I guess they
Even control my life
And tell me what to do
Is it my fault for growing?
Up in society the
Plan was for all this to happen
It seems like they all had it figured out
I guess I'm a treat
Because they want me locked up
I'm not trying to do nothing more
Or nothing less I was just trying to survive this cold world
Cold people but yet most people really deserve
To be locked up out there
Presidents, governments, rich people, and politics.
D-A rappers, judges, they are all more criminals than me
More like convicts, killers, thieves, because they steal from the poor
They steal from justice, liberty and freedom from all of us...

NICO ***Though this next writer, who was once a standout POW writer from the max unit in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall, is struggling between wanting to stop banging and feeling like he can't put the breaks on, he gives a perspective on banging that's really respectable. With a burning desire to educate the younger generation, maybe because he's sees where his own roadblocks in life have hindered him, but it's way better to learn this from someone who's been there, done that, than someone who just gets paid to tell you what you should be doing. He's writing from Glen Mills School in Concordville, PA. We appreciate his words and insight, hopefully we'll hear some more ideas from him soon. We know times get hard and loyalties seem to outrank everything in certain situations, but we have a feeling there is a brighter day for you. The hard part is realizing you have to create that bright day because nobody else is going to do it for you.***

Change Or Continue To Bang

To all that feel like changing
Go for it because what's life if you're wasting it
By banging
Now I ain't trying to be a preacher
Because I haven't stopped yet either
I want to see how life is without it
People tell me it's much bigger and greater
I'm confused
Just don't know what to do
So I get a bottle of Alizé to ease the pain
But it turns out to be an allusion
Because I'm still locked up
As you can see I'm going through a lot of frustration and confusion
This morning my mind was set to change
But at the end of the day all I wanted to do is bang
I think what I need is some guidance
Someone to help me get on the right track
I'm so sick and tired of being on this wrong path
I had a dream last night that I went forward in life
And never looked back
I hope my dream comes true because
That's exactly what I want to do

Thinking About The Special One

A lot has changed
But only death will do us part
That's how I feel deep down in my heart
I can't wait to see you forget the memories of these past days
When I came home will everything be the same.
I've feelings for you so tell me what the situation is
I need to hear from you 'cause not talking is ridiculous

Payin' The Price

Just can't remember the last time I had a good day
Wishing I could be with my family
And putting a smile on my lady's face
But I guess I can't 'cause I'm trapped
It just happens to be my fate
Just take a look in my eyes
You'll see there's nothing but anger and hate
You ask me why I feel this way
Its because when I wake up everyday
I'm still stuck in this gatcho (messed up) place
But what keeps me going is when my roommates
Tell me to stay strong and you'll have better days
But damn things just ain't the same ever since that one day
I made my enemy beg
I thought I won but turned out
I was the one who got played
I should of never made that mistake
I should of thought twice
But of course I didn't so I got to pay the price
Which is losing two years of my life

To My Carnal (Bro) In The Hall

I know being locked up got you feeling
A little wicked
Just hoping and praying you'll find a way
Out the system
But when people are trying to help
You ain't trying to listen
I know how you feel because I'm in
The same position
Been locked up for almost a year
But if you look at my face you'll see
I don't shed no tears
Because I got to stay strong so I
Could get through my lost year
Now I'm going to say the same to you
You got to stay strong
Bro your time ain't that long
But when you do get out homeboy just
Don't do wrong
And remember what I said in the cell before I left
always keep up your head

Pain And Struggle

I feel the pain
Waking up every day doing the same old thang
Loved ones telling me to change
But homeboys telling me do the same old thang
Never stop continue to gang bang
I'm confused
Just don't know who to go to
Who would of knew
This youngsta would do a crazy crime
Then end up losing two years of his life
I want to get out and get my life on track
Go forward and never look back
Tell me why it is so hard to succeed
I want to do good
Buts it's just too difficult to leave the 'hood
But one thing I know is I have time
So I'm going to continue to try and
Strive for what I want to be in life

I Still See No Changes

Tell me why I wake up and still see no changes
Kids banging at all ages
Getting murdered dying got mothers screaming and crying
This worlds corrupt
Got twelve year olds experiencing drugs
Next thing you know they're addicted going nuts
When did it all begin
Is it possible for this to ever end
It's like a never ending cycle
It just seems like there's no way out
Youngstas continue to try to impress older homeboys
To show what their life is all about
But what we don't know is that the homeboy
Ain't going to be there for us if you get stabbed or shot down
Just try and listen to me
I want the next generation to succeed
Think about your nieces, nephews, or kids
How do you want them to grow up?
In a cell like yourself or would you rather them be free
Think about that and start taking some actions
Don't throw away your life for nada
Live the rest of your days with satisfaction

A Dream

Sexy little smile with those sexy little lips
Thinking of the first time we kissed
Looking deep in your eyes
Catching the sparkle of light
Getting lost forever wondering am I alright
As I go to touch your face and hold on to you tight
I realize it's the same dream from the other night

I'm missing my baby boy, he's getting big and I'm not there. Man that's sad.

JOHNNY "BOY" VELASQUEZ *It's sad hearing of children who've lost their fathers to gang life and incarceration, but it seems like it's happening all the time in today's world. This next father is locked up in a California State Prison in Chino, CA, and he drops a couple lines on us. We hear how much he wishes he could've been there for his child, but it gets overshadowed by his love for his old lifestyle, and then his lust to hook up with someone while incarcerated. First of all, The Beat Within doesn't play love connection and we certainly don't want to give the children reading this clouded messages by sort of telling them to do as we say not as we do. We believe that there are circumstances where it can be helpful to give lessons we ourselves aren't following, but its mostly wise to practice what we preach. Anyhow, there are some great ideas in these two pieces and he did share a lot about himself, so it is worth reading. We just hope he's more aware of the messages he's sending our readers by glorifying the same things he wish would change.*

Tired Of These Cages And Lies

Q-volle, me llamo "Johnny Boy" y soy del valle San Gabriel. This is a song I wrote for my babies' momma back in Utah. I'm sure there's a gang of vatos y hinas who can relate to my song so aye te va!

"This window is teasin' my freedom, I'm thinking of my life's next move." Friends do I need them, my lil' wagon is all messed up and I'm the one who jacked it all up and now I'm sittin' here with running tears and having fears because now I'm all alone. All bullshhhh aside I'm gonna hurt someone - aqui estoy otra vez en la pinta (here I am once again in the pen) - chino central, no joke! I'm trying to adjust from my screwed up past. I know I'm a fool. Huh? But let me tell you my young camaradas (friends) I've been mistreated-misguided, misplaced and most definitely misunderstood, all my life and I've learned the hard way that only I can make the change.

I've spent a gang of tiempo (time) in these the feds SPU and in the states SHU celled up, solo y on walk alone with just the concrete to talk to. I ain't no killer I'm just a simple individual who's never been able to fit in and be accepted by normal honest people before so I would put up a smoke screen on my past. I would lie. I've made it out to the calles (streets) twice since my last soleta. Only to fail, get up, and return to my prison home living in a world of dirt! In a restroom the size of hell! For the first time in a long time I make it out my cell my first few days on the calles, I make up my mind that I wanted "change," so I fled the state and for some apparent reason, I arrived in beautiful Utah. Why? I don't know but I was on the right road to "change."

Soon after, while working and living in a homeless shelter, I meet the woman of my dreams. From the moment I looked in her eyes I was in love. That's crazy huh? I started dating this Mormon hina (girl) and, not long after, our love for each other became mutual. Man we were in love! Check this shhh out - it was the first time for me being in love and con ella (with her) it was mi primera vez making amor (my first time making love). Man who would have thought? Thirty three years old and I was still cherry (a virgin) - I know, laugh. But it's the truth.

Well you guessed it! My hina got pregnant and I was gonna be a dad. Check out what happened, I got torcido (locked up) by Utah police and while in jail, Jen and baby were out there alone, CDC came out for me, I came back to California air bound shackled back to prison hell.

(Repeat) how can I make a change when things just stays the same there a change in my life that I need so bad, all my life I've needed "change" I got a taste of it once and I loved what I had. I'm tired of these cages and feeling so sad. I told some lies and lost what I had my beautiful life that I had started came to an end.

I ended up getting nine months flat and my plans now were to make it back. My hina and son, Adyn. He was born Oct. 12th, 2005 I can't believe I made something so beautiful. I went back looking for her and my son. Jennifer had my son, while I was incarcerated. That sure as hell was not cool, man my baby girl the poor thing was out there all alone on the calles with our son. She did what she had to do in order for her and my son to survive - she's tuff she put it down for her and my son could survive. "Gracias, adios she soon found help - she was off the calles, Jennifer thought I was never going to return for her and our son, because when I finally found her she was shocked as hell. I guess she didn't think I cared and loved her and my son enough that I would come back for them "she was wrong" I knew what I had so I was determined to save what we once had and we had a beautiful son between us.

Yeah yo soy past life that will always be part of me but I wanna be good now. "I'm a father now" my goal is to give my son what my father gave me everything I love him, I miss him it's messed up he's only a memory now. I just want to live my dreams, I've learned now that nothing is unchangeable as long as you know, change is there. Just like, Reinhold Niebuhr, once said; God grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. All I ever wanted was to have a familia of my own, lil' homies. I don't want to end up being some dumb fool back in the varrio, playing stick up kid because that shhh don't have no happy end.

I want to have a familia of my own because on the serious side, lil' camaradas (friends) I'm scared to end up being alone, sleeping alone and listening in bed all alone to an empty house.

(Repeat) how can I make a change when, when things just stays the same. Theres a change in my life so bad. I'm tired of these cages and feeling so sad. I told someone lies and lost the best thing I had. My problems we're a heavy burden on those that once loved me now I wish I could just shake 'em lose or make it all good. Does a gangster like me worry all the time, shhh with me it just wouldn't be normal if I didn't worry. I know I really should because I brought down my own cantons (homes) on myself. I know there's nothing else to prove. As you can clearly see, that in the process of my sickness and madness, I let the two people that I loved most in the world down and now they're gone.

(Hook 1) I can't make it in life, if I try alone I'm U.S. state raised girl. God can you help me please I can only wish to make it back home - where's that? Good question! Honestly I hope it ain't in Chino! And for that reason I pray on my knees someone help me please.

Now I'm back in Chino part two - and I'm marinating right here in palmas the hoyo holmes and I'm missing my baby boy, he's getting big and I'm not there. Man that's sad. I love him I call him my dad lil' homies I'm a gangster but all bullshhh aside and I do have my days when I go crazy and this vato breaks down. You know how they say emotions speak louder than words right. Well, I want you all to know that sometimes words only hide the truth.

(Me talking) "Hey camaradas you know how they say; you never know what you had until it's gone. Now I have no one not even my mom and dad. They've been gone now I have no one not even them that songs "Missing You" by Ms. Diana Ross, plays in my head. Adyn and Jen - I'm a rider I'll be alright, I'm learning and maybe one day I'll get my shhh right and maybe someday you guys will want me back? And all B.S. aside I'll come back because if I would of never met you, Jen I wouldn't have wanted this change

(Repeat Part 2 Ending) How can I make a change when things just stays the same. There's a change in my life that I need so, so bad I'm tired of these cages and feeling so sad. I told many lies and lost what I had.

(Final Cut) Man I got problems, I'm so stupid I should of just been straight up with my girl. Now she gone and I can't get her back "praying to god" lord please help me to always remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that you and I together cant handle

JOHNNY BOY VELASQUEZ (CONT.)

This is A Background Report Conducted By Myself About My Life

Johnny Velazquez's academic career was as short and lack luster as his best friend and homeboy Corby Brown. They had taken almost the same schedule of classes and gotten almost the same grades. They'd been assigned to the same dorm but had not been roommates. At the end of the first semester though, Corby Brown had moved out, Johnny Velasquez had kept his residency in the dorm, unlike Mr. Brown's file, most of Mr. Velasquez's is filled with formal grievances outlining the young, Mr. Velazquez's troubled career at the University of California, San Bernardino.

During his first week John Velasquez had been caught throwing full beer cans at the people attending a frat party. The dean of students wrote sympathetically that this episode showed bad judgmen,t but that John had promised that nothing like it would happen again. Two letters from female teachers reported that Mr. Velasquez interrupted their lectures, made inappropriate comments in class and had not turned in a single assignment.

Man, growing up I was blessed for I had the potential to be a talented athlete. My dad and mom were holding a lot of athletic aspirations for me their only son. They had hoped to one day go watch me play at college stadiums. I gave up sports, right out of high school. I wanted to run my neighborhood. Anyhow, back to my life story.

By the end of the first semester, John had racked up close to $775 in unpaid parking tickets. (I had a Kawasaki Ninja 600R motorcycle and a Chevy Iroc Cont.) Apparently Johnny didn't learn his lesson, for the second semester the total for tickets reached $1050. These tickets were all duly paid for by his mother and father before the start of each semester. Private schools like UCSB and others accept vast sums of money in the form of tuition and endowments from moderately wealthy, influential familias like the Browns and the Velasquez's. Allowances were made, nevertheless Johnny Velasquez had taken it upon himself to voluntarily leave the school, even while attending RCC. Things for Johnny weren't much different for him.

In a letter dated August 14, John wrote that he would not after all be returning in September. He asked that his tuition be refunded promptly and that the check be made out to him two days later. After John had moved out of the dorms it was discovered that Mr. Velasquez and Mr. Brown were the prime suspects in a case being conducted by the FBI and other law enforcement dept. throughout Southern California, into the investigation of John and Corby it was declared that the two were in face introducing and sales of illegal drugs and steroids to the athletic depts. of UCSD, UCSB and USC and UC Irvine. Mr. Brown was informed by a relative that the FBI had been summoned to investigate him and John. Mr. Brown then alerted his friend Mr. Velasquez. Mr. Brown and Mr. Velasquez disappeared for about a year, only to resurface as active members of the United States Marine Corps. Eventually this whole case was dismissed.

The moment John Velasquez hit high school, it has been non-stop pandemonium. John has always pushed the boundaries to see how far he could go. One time - and you got to hand it to the kid for ingenuity - he filled the back of his uncles dump truck with old tractor tires, drove to the center of town in the middle of the night and somehow got those things, weighing no less than 200lbs each on the 50ft high flagpole. It took the city days and the cost of over $4000 to figure out how to get those damn tires off there. Mr. Velazquez was outraged at the certain council members daughter who had said he had a small penis. Nonetheless, John has always been the center of attention in his family and among his friends. Anyhow I joined the USMC in 1989. I loved the marines. I've been schooled by the best in disciplinary. I did my boot camp. I was asked if I would like to be a ranger. I went to West Virginia Ranger School and did 2 years of training. I graduated from ranger camp in '91, my new M.O.S was 0321. I was officially a Recon Ranger. I was professionally trained to be a specialist in heavy machine and weapons. I know everything from M16's to mortars, what a job huh?

I served in Desert Storm from '91-'92 in the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. I've also been to Angola, Zambia, Rhodesia and various other parts of the world. I've had my share of failures in life but I've tasted my share of accomplishments and achievements. When I finally arrived back in the states I was based in Puerto Rico, soon after that I was back in California. While stationed in California, I became involved in the illegal possession and sales of US military arms. I was court marshaled and found guilty. I did 30 months in Leavenworth, Kansas. I lost all my benefits that would of helped me when I got into my senior year. I got a dishonorable discharged. My homeboy Corby went off on his own right after boot-camp. I heard that he now works for homeland security in Puerto Rico. Anyhow for me, kicked out of the marines and done serving my tiempo in a federal pen. I was back!

Now back in my neighborhood my parents and friends still loved me. And among my homeboys I was highly respected. I tried to be as good as I could be because I didn't want to get into anymore trouble, some of you reading this must be saying this vato is crazy. All bullshhh aside, I am. Yeah my mental health is firme "nobody's" a hundred percent, but I'm always in the high nineties. I may get occasionally restless during the time of full moon but I don't think I'm a danger to anyone. Anyhow I soon started seeing this hina name Karla Q. she was cool and always smelled good. I wasn't in love with this hina but I enjoyed her company. I took her a gang of places. Man friends at The Beat Within I remember this one time that I went out with Karla and her parents and some relative of hers who were visiting from New Mexico. All together we were a big group of 10 visiting the zoo in San Diego on Easter weekend.

Anyhow there were a gang of girls, Chinese tourists, visiting from Beijing, China. Well while we were all waiting for the monorail to arrive these three Chinese Hinas cuddles up close to me and a fourth member of the Chinese girls took some pictures of us standing together. Karla's mother got pissed off suddenly and shoved the Chinese hinas hard physically away from me. I started laughing right and Karla made a look at me like I was embarrassing her, when the monorail arrived me and Karla's family all boarded the monorail. The same three Chinese kinas who had took the picture with me were fooling around and one of them was leaning of the monorail and not getting in, not getting out and the doors closed on one of the Chinese girls head, she started screaming, I leaped up and tired to pull the doors apart. The monorail was moving and the doors would not budge. I got upset a socked the window out of both doors. Straight out of frustration of not being able to save the Chinese girl. Man friends the other people including Karla's family in the monorail didn't move to help me. No one else responded friends just as I screamed for help the damn doors opened and I was able to pull the poor girl in. I helped the poor hina. She was bleeding but I knew she was going to be alright.

So later after we enjoyed the park and were heading to our cars, I stopped and told Karla's familia what the hell would they have done if those doors had closed on the poor girls neck instead of her head, she'd have been decapitated.

continued on next page

JOHNNY BOY VELASQUEZ (CONT.)

continued from previous page

Friends at The Beat Within they just all didn't respond to that either. They all stared past me just the same ways they'd stared past me and the Chinese girl while I wais trying to save her. I called Karla and all her familia a bunch of cowards! I found my car and left Karla and her parents behind! Later when Karla ran into me I told her that I was not saying sorry for what I had said and that I would never apologize to her family. She knew now that I meant it! I told her that people like herself and her family turn to stone because they need order! They won't admit that life is chaos "there's no order" I learned this while in the Marines I've been all around the world and it's all the same.

When I was in USMC I was in the business of making order out of chaos to quell the masses. Hey I like this quote by Julius Caesar: "I love the name of honor more than I fear death!" People are too afraid to admit to chaos! They just know and want material instinct. When I was a kid and even up until now I've gone against the formula sabes comoto digo? I fear no one nor situation for I know that my parents, grandmother and god are always with me!

In 1997 while serving a sentence of 32 months in the California prison system I lost my mom and dad at the same time. They were in a serious car accident. I miss them so very much. I'd give my arms and legs just to feel my mothers touch or to hear my father's laugh and voice.

When I paroled I had no more parents. I had given up on religion and God. I once told a Christian brother on the streets that if God were to step in front of me, I would bomb on him for taking my parents from me. Anyhow once again being back in my varrio I was givin' the yaves the keys to run my gang, and when I returned back to prison I became a member of a prison gang. What did this all get me nada! Did it give me fortune? No! Did it give me peace of mind - chale? Did it give me drugs and hinas and happiness? No! I'm through with prison politics and street gangs.

Although I'm no longer a prison gang member nor no longer a street gang member. I'm still a "G" and no matter what anyone says! Some may ask are you a killer the answer is no! Could I kill someone if I had to? Sure anyone can. Could I love with myself knowing that I killed someone, I'd have to!

Anyhow right now I am currently Ad-Seg waiting to go to the SHU it is more than likely that I will be released from here at CIM in March of next year. I will no longer be on parole. My charges of why I'm here in the hole is because of "battery on an inmate with the use of force."

I am also under investigation for numerous other things. They go as followed: inmate Velasquez's on Oct 16th, induced others to participate in the act of a riot inside the central gym. Inmate also occupied a position of gang leadership and dominance over another prison gang known and all its participants many of which were seriously injured. Inmate Velazquez was also reportedly injured with two knife wounds to his back. Inmate Velasquez's misconduct included the threatening of several eye witnesses inmates also prevented and dissuaded witnesses from testifying against him and members of his gang, inmates also induced others of his gang who were not involved in the gym riot to perjure themselves in many ways that is continually interfering without investigation and adjudication of his illegal acts. The plan sophistication and professionalism to which inmate Velasquez's acts of violence were carried out resulted in ten serious injuries on inmates and three stabbings. Inmate Velasquez will remain in Ad- Seg 'till further notice because there are many facts indicating premeditation is involved in these professional inmate hits, therefore this will remain an ongoing investigation. I am just looking forward to a whole lot of nada when I got out now.

My girl Jennifer left me for another vato and she has our one year old son Adyn with her. I hope that I am able to establish some sort of arrangement with my ex so that I can see and visit with my son.

Anyhow when I get out in March I'll be looking for a new hina. Is there any hinas out there interested in meeting a vato like me, "with a piercing intellect?" I really can live in a civilized manner. I'll even sing the song "I'd like to buy the world a coke" to you. Whenever I use to hear that song on T.V. when I was a kid it used to give me a warm feeling in my heart. I ain't no womanizer extraordinaire and I sure the hell ain't no pimp!

Well this concludes a lil' about my life story, I've shared a lil' about my happy days to sad days and the days that I was just happy to be alive. I lost my baby's momma because I kept a lot about myself locked up. The next time I meet a hina that I fall in love with, I will not make that mistake twice! Well, its been my pleasure sharin' myself with my friends but I'm gonna have to kick the door down out of here. I'll get at you on my next run. Alrato!

TENAMAXTLI ROSAS

Taking derogatory words and flipping are something a lot of social groups are doing nowadays. Sometimes it's way too hard to make everyone who uses those terms with a hateful attitude stop, so instead we sort of use those words with a different definition amongst ourselves to take the hate out of them. Sometimes people agree with it, and sometimes they don't, but whatever the case it's happening all the time. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. And we really enjoy the intelligence he displayed in putting this piece together.

No matter what side of the border we reside,

we're all descendants of the same aboriginals

100% Poncho

Poncho is defined in the Spanish dictionary as meaning withered fruit, decay - shriveled up and spoilage. But this word is also used to convey a derogatory term, aimed to tip the balance of the peoples inner-structure. By categorizing and calumniating Mexican-Americans, in an effort to intrigue advocacy towards unpatriotically self-hatred, from these south of the Mexican border. And at the same instance, those who choose to practice such epithetic diction are scrambling towards the U.S. soil such undiplomatic personal attitudes are not just disenfranchising ones dignity of identity, but also hinders social climate - consequently the people as a whole will lose sight as being a participant towards achieving their cognition of social chambers of equality.

While for others it's a driving force that keeps them optimistically perpetuated. No matter what side of the border we reside, we're all descendants of the same aboriginals who'd dwelled the Enhance soils, which in reality still dwells today through the blood that's coercing through our veins, we are people ancestrally connected. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct extensive research of ones heritage in order to have a provisional image of our future. We will find ourselves marveling with furor on the information that we'll discover. A new emerging ethnic group that's composed of Indian and European blood - Mexicayotl. It would be healthy to acquire positive views of strident believe of decisive patriotism....

TERRY LYTLE ***We love hearing from this next writer because he has a huge heart and a whole lot of great things to talk about. This week is no different as he hits us with a beautiful poem to his mother that fully takes the responsibility and guilt off of her and places it on himself. It's a real act of kindness because any mother knows that the most awful thing that can happen to you is when you feel like you've failed as a mother. However, raising a child in today's world is difficult because of all the negative things that go on in today's world. He's writing from Lanesboro Correctional Institution in Polkton, North Carolina. We hope is mother gets a chance to read this because we're sure it'll brighten her day.***

Dear Moma

How may I help you understand,
That I didn't have my leader, "The Ole Man?"
Growing up, missing my Dad, was rough.
People say: "Life's a witch, and love's tough."
But the streets of my youth were twice as tough.
Seeing you, my Mom, struggle to survive -
With your only thoughts, on keeping us alive:
It made me hate the ole man.
Had me wondering, if he cared about the son that he had.
Yet, still I wonder, what made me so bad?
And why, I felt it's a right, to maintain the excuse of being mad.
I never wanted to justify my behavior;
In fact, I don't want to anymore. I just give thanks to God,
For you - and that he saved ya.
Without you, I'd be lesser of a man.
You taught me, when nothing's left, I should still stand.
I cannot say, I always paid attention to the lessons.
It's kind of why, I've been in so many court sessions.
What am I to do, when I've ranted and raved, so much?
Drug doing and money making got us out of touch.
Emotions have never been a thing.
I was too busy scheming, with more of a devious means.
I've asked god, to let you see me now.
"I'll try to love Moma, God: teach me how."
Give you respect, Moma - it's what shouldn't have to be earned.
"God, I'm your student; I continue to learn."
In this, breathing life, the flame of the pit, still burns.
Hell's been calling; it's what I've earned.
But now, I got a kid of my own, getting grown all alone
Possibly hating her dad.
I ask God, Mom: "Why must it be, like with me and my dad?
And how is it, my lady, can just walk away -
With no thoughts about the times we had?"
I ask God to help you see how -
That, because of my Dad, Moma - I'm a man now.
God's guidance, was yours; His strength, now mine.
I just hope, he'll help you see. That I got this way, by using my time.
It wasn't the crime. Or the guns; the slumming.
It was me: from Him I was running.
Lord, help me-I believe, Moma, that you've damn near given up.
So, I'll tell you, how my heart feels; in the way I sum this up.
There's no more need; for lies or alibis.
Feeling built to survive because I'm always doing time;
I just wanted you to know, your son still cries,
Even though my eyes remain dry.
What can I do, Moma? Talking to God; writing to you -
I blame me. It wasn't you.
The fault is all mine, for the things that I do these truths are true.

MUTTBUCKET ***We welcome to our pages, first time contributor, muttbucket, all the way from Roseville Minnesota! No muttbucket is not incarcerated, but he is a man who loves and has great respect for The Beat Within. Due to his love for this work, we encouraged him to write a story and that he has! We hope this is not the last time we hear from muttmucket, he has a way with words and we think his insights only add more flavor to an already soulful piece of work known as The Beat Within. Welcome muttbucket!! Read on readers!! By the way, we hope he doesn't mind that we included the afterthought to his story as well? We found that equally is interesting. Thanks mutt!***

Listen To Your Mama. Mama knows.

I was solo camping in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Northern Minnesota early one spring just after ice out when I heard an animal chattering away near the water.

Curious, I went down to the shoreline just in time to see a mama beaver swim by. Following about 10 feet behind her was the source of all the racket. A little baby beaver was swimming along just jabbering away. As the youngster came near the rock I was standing on, it stopped to look at me and its excited yammering increased in both tone and speed. When the tiny little critter noticed that it's mama ignored it and had continued on her way, it took off after her. An hour or two later I heard the same chattering in the distance coming nearer. Wanting to see the little tyke again, I went back down to the shore and waited for the beavers to pass. As the mama beaver came near to where I was standing she slipped underwater and swam by, surfacing a short distance away. As the little baby beaver neared, it too slipped underwater and swam until it had passed my rock.

I had to laugh as I could just hear the mama beaver chastise her little toddler on the dangers of those big two legged creatures. "Don't stop and yammer at them, it's best not to draw attention to yourself like that, you don't know if they are dangerous. Learn when to shut your yap and pass by underwater." Listen to your mama. Mama knows.

Sometimes you have to learn when to duck; sometimes you'd better figure out when to keep your mouth shut. But there are times when it's simply best to quickly determine when it's advantageous to do both. It's a good lesson for everyone to learn.

An Afterthought To My Story

I'm glad you found my little story from the wilderness acceptable... I've gone up there at least twice a year for a week at a time... early spring and late fall are my favorites...

Most of the time, I'm by myself and have gone up there for well over a dozen years...adding it up, I guess I've spent months alone up there.... Very introspective and satisfying...

I've learned a lot about myself, nature, and life in general... it's such a beautiful, peaceful place...I've been up there for entire trips without seeing a single other person...and when I do see someone, I usually only see the shine of their canoe in the distance....

For the first few years, my wife was worried about me being alone up there but now she doesn't worry...heck, I'm more worried about the five hour drive up there than being there in the woods...

Early mornings and early evenings are great for critter watching...

I often go out at night for a night paddle...leaving a LED light hanging at my camp so I can find it again...the night sky with the milky way is something I don't see in the city...nor the northern lights...bears, moose, wolves...it's great...!

I think that if more people would spend time alone in the woods for a couple of weeks, they'd be the better for it... There are a lot of lessons to be learned out there... The wrath of nature is a great humbler...I love getting my compass bearings for a remote pond not found on canoe maps and trekking my way through the woods to find it...I download satellite images to find them...I'll figure out where they are based on my canoe maps with the north south bearings and head out...I realize how small I am and how much I rely on "stuff" to live out there compared to "stupid" animals"...and nature in general...

In truth I was a bit concerned that it might not be the best idea to write something about wilderness camping that will be read by someone who is incarcerated but I thought the lesson taught by the mama beaver to her little tyke may be of interest, give them a tiny picture of the wilderness to escape too... and perhaps some may be able to relate it to their moms...sometimes mom chastises you for your own good!

The World

The world is effed up,
They have people arrested.
Everything is like a question,
Like we are being tested.
There's people out there killing,
We have a serial shooter.
We have people out there raping,
And we have dope dealers.

RAYMOND **The Beat Within is honored to have back the young poet, Raymond, Who thanks to his advocate and teacher Jim Devenzia , who pursued The Beat Within for Raymond has his latest efforts once again featured in our priceless publication. We ae glad to have Raymond, and we hope to have more fabulous writers stepping up from the group home placement Parc Place in Chandler, Arizona. On a final note, we would love to see a story in The Beat Within about your life too, with the hope you do not fall back into the traps that brought you into the system in the first place! We fear that you are so ready to throw away your chance at freedom for a gang that could care less about you. Wake up! Talk to your counselors and those that care for you!**

Homies (With Jeremiah)

A homie has always been there,
Ever since day one.
Down to do a little dirt,
Down to have some fun.
Always there for you,
Especially on the block.
There 24/7,
All around the clock.
Never leaves you empty,
Always has an extra clip.
Catches you when you're fallin',
Especially when you trip.
Always by your side,
Cause he's down.
So make sure he's down,
And he don't trip.

My Last Night On The Block

Two homies chillin' Friday night,
Blowed as hell.
Some rivals roll up,
Looks like they just ran out of luck.
They pull out their straps,
And start talking shhh.
Then we got mad,
And emptied our clips.
We watched them both fall,
And hit the pavement.
For them talkin' shhh,
That's their payment.
Now they're chillin' with worms,
six feet under.
The murder replays in my head,
And the gunshots sound like thunder.

t feels like I don't know my past,
Like everything's a mystery.

My Love

My love is my mom,
And the Earth.
But I love my mom more,
Because she gave me birth.
I love Earth,
Because I have a place to stay.
I have a house to go to,
To sit down or lay.
I had my mom ,
To sit and talk.
Now she's in prison,
And the doors are locked.

Thinkin'

Just chillin' listening to music,
I'm in Parc Place.
It's cool,
Just that I don't know a face.
I'm just waiting to get out,
Then I'm going to see my peers.
We have to keep everything a secret,
There are too many ears.
I just cleaned my shoes,
Trying to keep them clean.
But the day I get out,
The weed's gonna make me fiend.
Everybody's nuts or crazy,
They think that they see bugs.
When I walk around in the mall,
All I'm gonna see is Lugz.
I just did my paperwork,
It's on my life history.
But it feels like I don't know my past,
Like everything's a mystery.

STRANGER **It's always liberating to be proud of your race, but we have a slightly different take on it than this next writer. We feel like its cool to be proud of your race, but to make that the number one thing you're proud of to us is not wise. For we have no control over what race we are when we come out of the womb, so why be proud of something we had no control over. Why not be proud to be a Mexican taking college classes? Or a Mexican that takes care of his family? Just being Mexican doesn't say anything except where your ancestors are from. But we can understand why one would be proud of their race like Stranger is. He's writing from High Desert State Prison in Susanville, CA.**

I thank my mom for giving me my heart,
I thank my dad for showing me to be proud from the start...
I am proud and brown
This makes me stand out in the crowd

Brown And Proud

I'm proud of the color of my skin
But the true Mexican comes from within,
It's my Aztec blood that makes me proud,
Its time to show the world what us Mexicans are about...
My skin color on people has an effect
It makes them look at me with respect,
I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world,
Not even if they offered me the biggest pot of gold...
I thank my mom for giving me my heart,
I thank my dad for showing me to be proud from the start...
I am proud and brown
This makes me stand out in the crowd,
Don't ever underestimate us,
You know what I mean?
It's all about the tri-color, the red, the white, and the green.

SAMUEL CAPERS ***One of the worst aspects of working at The Beat is how far we fall behind we fall in our correspondence with long-term friends and contributors to The Beat, like Lee Samuel Capers - Sammy Caps - who continues to faithfully send us pieces, even when we aren't able to keep up with his pace. The pieces he's submitted below, for example, we are publishing even before publishing still earlier pieces (which we will get to). Here he writes not just of the power of prisons to turn children into gang soldiers, but the power of the individual to reclaim his/her personal identity and become a Warrior for Peace. We can only hope that this teacher/writer will not lose faith in us as he waits - sometimes for months - to see his wisdom put to paper. But if his status as a prisoner condemned to death has not led him to lose faith, then we feel sure he will not give up on us, either. Mr. Capers writes from Death Row, San Quentin State Prison.***

I was bitten and chewed up
Heart-broken for no reason
Spit out and disregarded
As if I committed treason

The Warriors Of Peace

"I am a lost soul floating in outer space, screaming for help, but in space, no one can hear you scream....
I am like a ghost; I cause fear because I am in fear and I'm alone....
I am like the moon' the only time I shine is in the dark...."

-David Mancillas, Dreamyard/ L.A Inner-City Youth Poetry

"How can I not kill another vato? Especially after he killed one of our homies, ese? See man, you don't even understand. This is my barrio, my familia, my life! This is all I gots, homie. I love them and they love me back.

Parents? Yeah right! My jefito is Torcido(locked up). My Jefita, she's all strung out. But the homies... yeah, I love 'em a lot, ese..."

-A 12-year-old Compton gang member

Angel Of Mine

In my darkest hour
You were there
Then you leave me
Without world or care

Can't you see, girl
How I love you so?
And shed tears, a million
As I watched you go?

You took not a glance
When you went your way
And I sit and daydream
'Bout you to this day

Who was hating
And for what and why?
To convince you, Mandy,
To leave your guy?

I was bitten and chewed up
Heart-broken for no reason
Spit out and disregarded
As if I committed treason

Tell me now
Why did you go
Keep it all real
So the world would know

Was it all a game
And is it me who's played
The loser of the game
A clown's escapade?

Seems, oh, so unfair
How you bounced out laughin'
Oh yeah, it hurt me
But be damned if my heads hangin'

See, life is a circle
A funhouse for fools
When someone leaves you with pain
It'll come back to you

Did you think it funny
When I opened my heart?
Karma will visit you
With a hell of a start

Nah, I ain't the one
Mandy, it's high time
I could be cold
And let the last laugh be mine

Pero, why should I
Stoop down to your level?
See, one day you be heartbroke
Fightin' with the devil

Remembering when the fellas
They called me a idiot
For loving you, Mija,
I'll live to regret it

Still how can I regret
The beauty you possess?
And how can I deny
It's you I can't forget?

See, you've been misguided
By the ones who hate
They filled ya head with lies
And worked hard to manipulate

All I ever wanted
Was to be loved by you
An angel so pure
Lively and so true

A heart full of love
Is the dream I was having
Never knew I set myself up
For you to backstab me

Don't mean to come hard
I still love you, best believe
Although it's a true fact
God don't like ugly

So wherever you are
Never forget nor despise
You'll always be my Goo Goos
Precious Angel of Mine

Warriors Of Peace

When I first set foot here on death row at California State Prison, San Quentin, the profound effect which first impressions make upon an individual can be shocking: the vast number of inmates, the souls of lost men- children, and the fear that prevails in rule to punishments which society feels the convicted and condemned deserve. It's such an obvious thing when you have a man or woman in a gun tower, pointing a mini-14 at the back of your head, wishing the convict makes a wrong move, so the bullet from their gun will be deemed justifiable.

Fear and intimidation by officers and prison politics gives a person no choice but to be a hard individual who shows no emotions, and is not allowed to express his or her feelings in any other way than that which is acceptable in the yes of other convicts around them.

Northern and Southern California Hispanic gang members, Crips, Bloods, Skinheads and Asian gangs, along with any other "Disruptive Group" classifications, hold the prison yards down. Thus the warfare continues (and will never cease) to kill one another for whatever cause the individual is sold out for. They not only stalk our communities and spread the "Government Made" hate, but they breed in such places as the Youth Authority, Pelican Bay, Folsom, Chino, Tracy, Corcoran, Soledad, and of course, here on Death Row in good ol' San Quentin and Chowchilla State prisons.

Congress has made it a point to turn California into a "Prison State" and by doing so, with all their vain attempts to stop Gang Violence" they do nothing but contribute to the fire by building human warehouses which in reality are cesspools of anger, hate and utter hopelessness. "Gee thanks, Governor Arnold!" The full picture speaks in High Definition. Absolutely nada has been solved! Yet, more prisons are being built.

Today, there are members of another kind of gang forming behind California's prison walls. This gang is known as "The Warriors of Peace." These individuals are the ones who finally come to the point in their lives to where they finally realize that life is way too precious to destroy. These are the ones with boldness, who have taken a position and stepped up to the batter's plate and work hard at resolving situations before they turn into full-blown wars along with rivers of precious blood shed.

The Warriors of Peace are what so many want to be a part of - to leave the gang life and ride for a much better cause. Unfortunately, they fear what the other members of the gangs may have to say about their change of heart. On a lower note, they also worry about their safety. The pecking order of all gangs state: "once you are a member, it's for life." Still, the gang members sit back and say within themselves, "Maybe these peace makers will help prevent a loved one from getting all caught up in the gang life," and commend the Warriors of Peace, though they not dare say it out loud.

SAMUEL CAPERS (CONT.)

In the pages of this non-fictional work, you will read of peacemakers, legends who put their necks out on chopping blocks in order to end gang violence. Men such as Luis J. Rodrigues, Manny Lares, Monster Cody Scott, as well as organizations who work with the inner-city youth such as the San Francisco-based Beat Within, which is currently active with their workshops within the Juvenile corrections department, Barrio Unidos, Victory Outreach, World Ministries, and Modesto-based Genesis Center World Outreach, founded by pastor Joseph Lopez, a graduate of the East Los Angeles Branch of Victory Outreach ministries.

With numerous programs throughout the nation, the help needs to be distributed through a network of peacemakers, who represent each state individually. California, for instance, is in the midst of savage gangland murders, from the U.S./ Mexico Border to the highest point of the state.

Youngsters in this day and age, have a reputation to uphold, a name to make. The outcome of their fruits of labor land them on Death Row, security housing units, lifers in prison, or ultimately, dead. There's reasons for what each person says and does, but it still remains an injustice when a northerner kills a southerner and vice-versa. To the lives lost in the color wars between the nationwide Blood and Crips gangs, Asians and white supremacy organizations, our communities are stained with big, nasty dark spots of our children's innocent blood.

A child grows up and becomes what he seen on a daily basis, exposed to influences, brain washing and ill-treatment by adults the child thought he or she could trust. Children abused by parents who are drug and alcohol addicted, children who were and still are being sexually molested, have become society's most hateful, angry and not to mention, most hated soldiers and contributors of gang violence. They don't know what it is to be an everyday average kid. They take love given to them in the wrong way. They push away the sincere and accept the deception of false security. Sadly, they continue this way though adulthood. Thirty-year old gang members, veteranos and OGs are made behind the walls of the California Department of Corrections.

As you read the following pages, let us take time to reflect on a problem which many do not know nor do they care exists. It's a problem congress and officials of high ranking deem inferior, and is at the most inconvenient times, swept under a rug. And that problem is gang warfare, or as author Tom Hayden calls it in his book; Street wars gangs and the future of violence, "Urban Terrorism."

Conversation Between The Condemned:

(Sammy And Neighbor)
S: Hey...
N: Sammy? What's up?
S: Uh, over here trying to figure out if the damn committee will cut me loose to East Block in a few weeks. That's all... Why? What you into?
N: Ah man. Just over here missing my kids, homie. I mean these visits behind the glass is killing me softly, ese, ya dig?
S: Oh, come on now Old School. You been here on The Row for, what? Seventeen years? For sure you over that hard timing. If anybody should hard time it, it should be me!
S and N: (Laughter... Long silence...)
N: 'ey, Youngster, I'm waiting on a decision from the 9th Circuit. Don't know much how to feel, except... Damn! My day may be coming real fast like...
S: Damn Old School, I forgot about that. Don't know what to say.
N: Ain't nada to say. It's either L-Wop, new trial or die. I'm an old man Sammy.
(Long silence...)
S: Old school?
N: Yeah...
S: Ever wonder what it feels like to die?
N: This makes lil' sense to anyone I tell this to, but, once we was given the death penalty, we died on that same day. Everybody here on the row, we alive in the flesh, but our spirits is dead. We the living dead, Sammy. Done completed the first half of death and awaiting the second and final half...
S: Oh...
(Long silence...)
N: Youngster?
S: Yeah, Old School?
N: How you feeling?
S: Lonely, big homie. And for a lot of reasons, hella hurt. Been done wrong all my life to have to be rewarded with the likes of this bullshhh....
(short silence...)
N: So, uh, you ready to, um you know? Go?
S: Ain't got no choice in the matter, I guess.
N: Then get ready, we having that nasty-ass chicken adobo tonight, for dinner!
(Everybody on the tier falls out laughing...)
S: Yeah, you burnt out with ya old ass, big homie!
N: A'ight now! I'm off the wire...
S: I'll holla. (Thinks to himself: "Am I really ready to die?")

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